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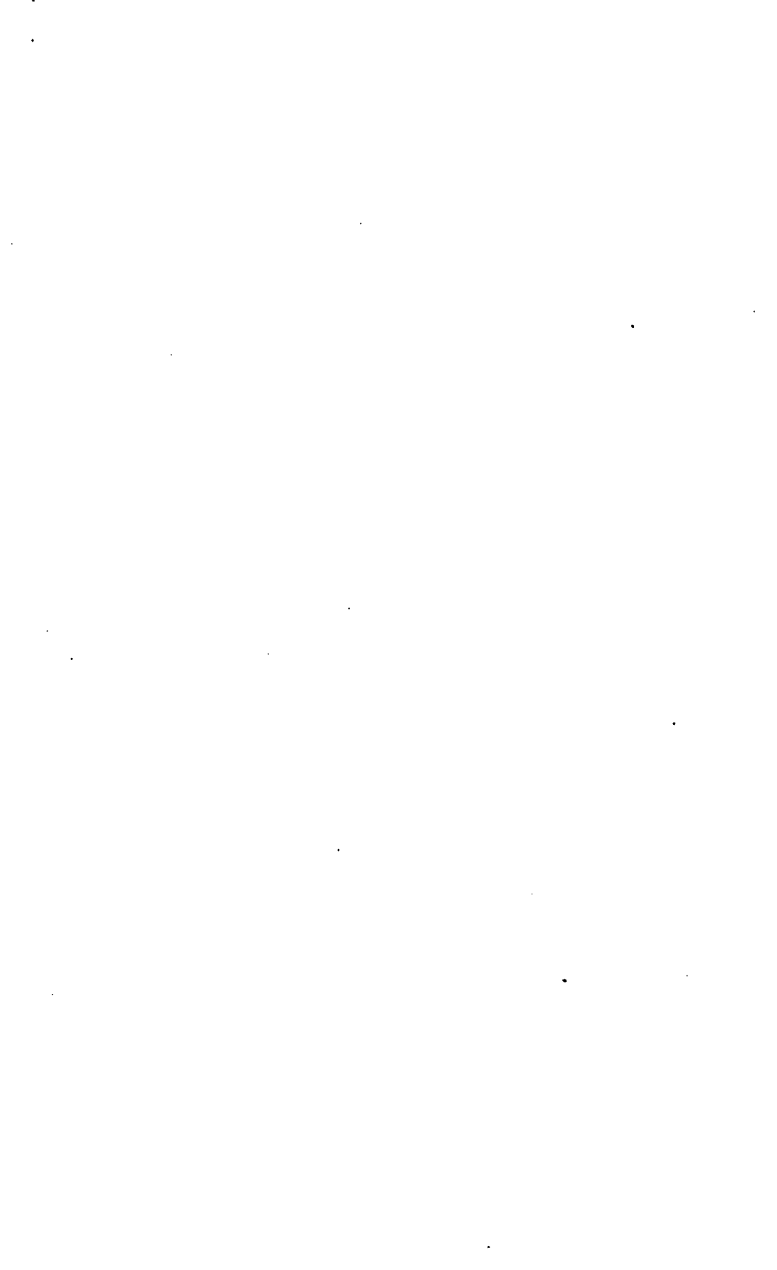
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445. 335.





VILLAGE PAUPERS.



LONDON;

SADBURY;

THE
VILLAGE PAUPERS.
AND OTHER POEMS.

by
G. W. Fulcher.



"They sought their Prison-home and entered there"

Page 41.

LONDON;
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN & CO.
SUDBURY;
G. W. FULCHER.

THE
VILLAGE PAUPERS
AND
OTHER POEMS

BY
G. W. FULCHER.

"The short and simple Annals of the Poor."

Second Edition.

LONDON :
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

SUDBURY :
GEORGE WILLIAMS FULCHER.

MDCCCXLV.



FULCHER, PRINTER, SADBURY.

TO
BERNARD BARTON,

IN REMEMBRANCE
OF A FRIENDSHIP EXTENDING
THROUGH THE LENGTHENED PERIOD OF
TWENTY YEARS,

This Volume is Inscribed

WITH SENTIMENTS OF
UNALTERABLE ESTEEM AND REGARD,

BY
THE AUTHOR.



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P R E F A C E .

The following extract from an appeal to the Legislature, the Clergy, and the higher and middle classes, in behalf of the labouring poor, will furnish by far the most suitable introduction to the "ower true tale" which forms the subject of the principal Poem in this unpretending little volume.

"We must now show to man what he does not like to look upon, a scene of abject suffering which he would fain persuade himself is no way chargeable upon him ; but of which, if he make no effort towards procuring relief, he must endure a portion of the responsibility : for the word is as stedfast as any other word of God, which declares "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

“A man applies for work, and cannot obtain it ; or he is too much enfeebled by sickness or privation for any labour that comes within his reach. He has, we will say, a wife and two children, which is far below the average number. It is admitted that these four individuals must, in a climate like this, have a shelter over their heads, and some covering for their bodies, and certainly they must have food to eat. To keep a house, even the poorest cottage, is out of the question, unless they find a landlord who allows the poor to live rent-free on his estate : and such a landlord would rarely have a vacant tenement at his disposal. We will therefore conclude that the poor man has already given up his cottage and sold whatever disposable article he had, and has sheltered his little party in a single room, at the lowest possible rent ever asked for such accommodation ; and that they never taste meat, butter, tea, or sugar, but eat the coarsest bread, sometimes softened in a little skimmed milk, sometimes dry, or with a cup of water, and now and then a hot potatoe, if they are plentiful, and sufficient fuel can be procured to boil them : we ask, supposing these four persons could thus live on one shilling per week each, how are those four shillings to be procured, or one fourth of the four ? The man goes to a farmer, or tradesman, and asks to be employed for whatever he may be pleased to give ; they have the full number of hands already at work, and cannot pay supernumeraries : the woman is willing to wash, to scour, to nurse, to perform any menial office even for her equals, on the same miserable terms, but for one who can afford a penny in remuneration,

she finds twenty eager, like herself, to earn that penny : and probably with twice or thrice the number of clamorous children to satisfy. The little ones would go on a message, if big enough, or put their hands to anything within their power to do ; but the poor, half-naked creatures have no better chance than their parents ; and if the weather be chilly, must either run about or huddle together to keep a little warmth in their shivering bodies, which, for lack of sustenance within and clothing without, have lost their natural glow. To this strait the unemployed labouring man must come ; and having fallen so far, several courses are open to him. In the country, he may, if courageous and untroubled by qualms of conscience, become a poacher, a sheep-stealer, or a highwayman : in towns, a petty thief, pickpocket, or burglar. The vigilance of the police-force, now distributed throughout the land, renders these callings exceedingly difficult and hazardous ; and the man who could bring himself to commit daring crime rather than see his wife and little ones actually starve, often lacks nerve to contemplate the consequences to them of his death or transportation.

“To the parish, therefore, the destitute family must go ; for the rigid enforcement of the vagrancy act puts public begging out of the question ; and the rural police are now not less efficient in protecting the country-gentleman’s door from such as would ask an alms, than their brethren in the metropolis are in defending street-passengers from a similar appeal.

Under such a system of guardianship against the cry of distress, blind Bartimeus might have sat by the road-side in vain. Yet no ; for Bartimeus appealed to Him to whose ear the stifled, yea, the UNUTTERED cry will force its way ; who, when Israel as yet knew him not nor looked unto him for relief, but only sighed by reason of the bondage, could say, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters ; for I know their sorrows." And as surely as he knew the sorrows of Israel's poor, he knows the sorrows of England's poor ; and the very ignorance in which they are left of his power, his willingness to save—the destitution of their souls—is among the heaviest of the burdens that oppression lays upon them. We not only silence their appeal to man, but bar their approach to God, while we leave untouched the barrier that natural sin and ignorance place between man and his Redeemer.

"So far we have described a general supposititious case : we will now relate one out of the thousands of actual recent occurrences that might be adduced. The scene is within some fifteen miles of London, and the circumstances as common as they are distressing. In a hamlet, wholly agricultural, the farmers lately discharged a dozen labourers belonging to the parish, who, of course, found themselves in the plight above described, altogether without resource. The parish has become part of a Union, under the New Poor Law, the Board of Guardians being located in

a small town, just five miles off. One poor man, having a wife and three children, went to lay their miserable case before the board, and to request admittance into the workhouse. Without a morsel to eat, he started early in the day to walk these five miles ; after long waiting among a crowd of applicants, amid the press of business attending a board-day, he was listened to, and his case taken into consideration. It was computed that if admitted to the workhouse, these five individuals would cost the parish fifteen shillings per week ; and the man being able-bodied, and willing to labour, the Board ordered the relieving-officer to 'find him work.' Accordingly, this officer appointed him to break stones and mend the roads, the wages being *one shilling a day*. The poor man, therefore, throughout the winter, has had to leave his miserable fireless home at early morning ; to walk five miles ; pass the day in a laborious, outdoor occupation, and finally to retrace the five miles at night : taking home with him for his own food, fire, and clothing, and the support of his wife and three little ones, *one shilling*.

"Without attempting to discuss the merits of the New Poor Law *seriatim*, we cannot quit the subject without remarking, that within the last ten years a most sad and dangerous change has been effected, —partly by the immediate operation of that law, and partly by the language used by its defenders,—in the tone and temper in which poverty is dealt with. A dozen years back, the feeling with which the helpless and necessitous poor were regarded, was a kind

and sympathizing one. No one doubted that among them many vicious and undeserving individuals might be found ; but the principle of British law was kept in view, that "it were better for a hundred criminals to escape punishment, than for one innocent person to suffer." Hence, on the great holidays, such as Easter, Christmas, the Queen's birth-day, &c., some share in the general festivity would be conceded even to the inmates of the workhouse ; and we can well remember the pleasure we felt, on being taken by the parish officers of our neighbourhood, more than once, to witness the comfortable fare provided for sixty poor old women on Christmas day, not one fourth of whom could be charged with having brought themselves to a state of pauperism by their own misconduct.

"But the whole spirit of those who at first framed, and have since carried out and defended, the New Poor Law, was at variance with this view of the matter. The comfort observable in many workhouses, was placed in the very front of the array of "abuses," which the new law was intended to eradicate. In the Report laid before Parliament, and on which the statute of 1834 was founded, details of the "excellent bread," and "capital table-beer," found in some workhouses, were given with great emphasis, and alluded to with marked censure. But let us now see whither the opposite system has conducted us.

“In the year 1833 the present secretary of the Poor-Law Commission, visited Reading, and his reports of what he saw there, of the mal-administration of parochial affairs, were laid before Parliament, and largely dwelt upon. He visited the workhouse in that town, and asked what the diet was. The master replied, ‘good wholesome victuals as anybody would wish to taste. We give them all meat three times a week.’ The reporter added, ‘every thing appeared remarkably cleanly and in good order.’

“Some persons would have considered this a favourable account ; but that Mr. Chadwick meant it quite otherwise is apparent from the language of a letter which he appends to his Report. In this letter the writer says,—‘The workhouse should be a place of *hardship* ; of coarse fare, of degradation and humility ; it should be administered with strictness, and *with severity*. It should be as *repulsive* as is consistent with humanity.’

“This system of ‘hardship,’ of ‘repulsion,’ of ‘severity,’ has been introduced under Mr. Chadwick’s own direction, and it is very clear that it has effected a great change in the *spirit manifested* towards the poor. A single instance will give some idea of the fearful nature and extent of the change.

"The place in which Mr. Chadwick was shocked with a sight of 'good bread,' 'excellent table beer,' and 'meat *three* times every *seven* days,' was Reading. Within sight, almost, of Reading, is the Amersham Union in Buckinghamshire, and in that Union, at Chesham, the following occurrence has happened within the last few weeks :—

"An Inquest was held at Chesham last week, on the body of Mary Jones, a widow of 70 years of age. It appeared from the evidence of Rachael Luckett, that the deceased had been lodging with her for some weeks, and that her allowance from the Amersham Union was *one shilling per week*, and a loaf, out of which she had to pay sixpence for her lodging. Her usual living was bread, salt and water. The day previous to her death witness gave her some potatoes, and on the morning of her death, witness went to a friend and *begged two-pence*, with which she purchased a chop and made a little broth. Deceased partook of a little and died in a few minutes. The medical attendant who was called in to see the deceased after her death, gave it as his opinion that she died of *exhaustion*."*

"Such is the working of the "strict and severe," the "repulsive" system ! It gives a poor woman of 70, who of course is quite unable to earn her own living by labour, "*one shilling per week*, and a loaf,"—to provide her with lodging, food, and clothing ! At an age when some few comforts are especially necessary, this poor old woman is reduced to mere bread and water, and of that, receives not quite enough to preserve life ! Such is the natural result of decrying and condemning a kind and liberal treat-

* Aylesbury News; July 22, 1843.

ment of the poor ; and of recommending that poverty shall, in general, be treated as a *prima facies* proof of criminality, and the condition of the supposed criminal rendered as “degrading” and “repulsive” as possible !

“Insufficient as any system hitherto known must prove, to meet the dreadful exigencies of daily-increasing pauperism throughout the country, it is certain that the poor man had once a reliance on the commiseration of those who hold the relieving power, which now he has not. When every applicant was more or less personally known to the dispenser of public relief for his district, a measure of feeling, call it neighbourly, or what you will, might be expected to exist in the bosom of the officer, which is wholly out of the question under an organization of aggregation. Give a man the supervision of distressed families within an easy walk of his own house, he will know, and if he be a humane man, he will care for them all : but mass together the heaps of poverty scattered about for miles in every direction, and in places where he is absolutely a stranger ; give him coadjutors between whom and himself as little sympathy exists as between either him or them and the poor ; pay him a salary to deal with all this misery as summarily and as savingly as he can ; and you make him a mere machine : you seal up every channel of kindly feeling, rendering it impossible for the strivings of humanity on behalf of distressed outcasts to prevail, among the distracting multiplicity

of duties imposed on him by an authority so absolute, as to visit the slightest deviation from its arbitrary rules, the smallest concession of general expediency to the heart-rending peculiarities of some extraordinary case, with dismissal from his office. The free, voluntary services of respectable inhabitants, formerly rendered in their own parishes, and the discretionary power lodged in hands well versed in the affairs of the neighbourhood, was one of the fairest features in our national polity as regards the poor : the hardships inflicted on them under the amended system, can only be estimated by taking in detail the miseries of an extensive Union." *

Sudbury, Suffolk,

August, 1845.

* "The Perils of the Nation," 3rd Edition.

London: Seeley, Burnside, and Seeley.

THE VILLAGE PAUPERS.



THE VILLAGE PAUPERS.

"The short and simple annals of the poor."

Where yonder fir-trees hang their cones on high,
The Union Poor-House meets the wond'ring eye ;
Smooth gravel walks the spacious entrance grace,
And towers and turrets crown the stately place.
The garden, gently sloping to the west,
In nature's beauty is profusely drest,
Flowers of all hues adorn the rich parterre,
And roll their fragrance on the evening air,
Whilst at the lofty mansion's iron gates,
In idle state th' obsequious Porter waits.

Ah ! little deem the careless passers-by,
How many a wounded heart goes there to die ;
Ah ! little deem they, that those huge walls hide
The bitter tears of shame and honest pride,
That there, expiring Hope's last ling'ring sighs
From earth's poor outcasts unregarded rise.
Business or pleasure's all-engrossing power,
Life's thousand cares that ask each fleeting hour,
Leave little leisure in wealth's anxious race,
For pity's claims to take their rightful place.
There, wasting sickness lingers day by day,
And all unheeded gasps her life away ;
While hireling nurses watch its ebbing sighs,
Impatient, close the scarcely sightless eyes,
And stretch the stiff'ning limbs ere the tired spirit flies.
—There, too confiding love retires to weep,
And o'er her guilt-born babe sad vigils keep,
Till sleep in mercy her swoll'n eye-lids close,
And give her care-worn frame to brief repose !

Oft hov'ring round her childhood's happy home,
Departed joys, like wand'ring spirits come ;
Familiar voices glad her eager ears,
And *one*, the lov'd of all, again she hears'
Whisper her name :—then with a start of pain,
She wakes to life and wretchedness again.
—There, children, severed from the household band,
By gnawing hunger's clamorous command,
Compelled to share th' imprison'd stranger's lot,
Pine for the playmates of their father's cot.
The aged poor, who strove when strength had fled,
By hopeless toil to earn their scanty bread,
With spade and barrow o'er the village green,
Their time-bent forms at day-light might be seen,
Scraping together from the public way,
The noisome heaps that there offensive lay ;
Oppressed by summer's heat and winter's cold,
And all the ills that wait upon the old,
Descending step by step the painful road,
They feel *must* lead to poverty's abode,

Yet struggling still, to lengthen out the way,
By miserable shifts from day to day ;
Forced like the aged Patriarch's famished son,
For bread to sell their birth-right—there are gone,
But far less blest than he, the wild—the free,
Who roamed at will, o'er hill, and vale, and lea ;
For these no more must tread the green hill's side,^a
Parted in age from youth's beloved bride ;
Forbad through life's few sad remaining years,
Grief's last resource—to mingle e'en their tears,
When the strong links of long affection's chain,
Are all that to the friendless poor remain ;
They drag with pain life's weary load along,
Lonely and lost amidst the motley throng,
Where evil passions cabined and confined,
And jarring tempers wound the peaceful mind !

Of all our village poor there was not one
Who could compare with old *John Ashford's Son* ;

Trained from a child in virtue's holy way,
He left it not in life's meridian day,
And well his anxious Parent he repaid,
For every sacrifice his love had made ;
In early life he better days had known,
The land he tilled was then his Father's own,
But ruin came, by faithless friends led on,
His crops were blighted and his prospects gone.
In his Son's cot he sought and found a home,
An earthly rest—a better rest to come.
Labour and sorrow was the old man's strength,
For four-score years had done their work at length,
And his once vig'rous mind was sinking fast,
To childhood's second stage the saddest and the last !
Each little comfort to himself denied,
Beyond his humble means the Son supplied,
To tempt the old man's failing appetite ;
He watched his restless ever new desires,
With filial tendency which never tires,

Well pleased some faint intelligence to trace,
Flitting across the old man's vacant face :—
Tales of his early life he'd still relate,
Strangely correct, save as to name and date,
But the day's record from his failing mind,
Passed fast away nor left a trace behind.
'Neath the tall elms where shone the setting Sun,
The village children, when their tasks were done,
Met for the evening's merry games, and there,
Propp'd in his cane-backed softly-cushioned chair,
He'd watch them play, his Grandchild on his knee,
Almost as feeble and as weak as he ;—
At times his mind seemed palsied and he'd sit
With streaming eyes in long abstracted fit,
Then starting from his reverie awake,
And with a strange sad laugh the silence break.
The long long summer hours he'd thus employ,
Causeless his grief and meaningless his joy,
Till his head drooped, his heavy eye-lids closed,
And in a transient sleep th' exhausted frame reposed.

When young *John Ashford* and his happy wife,
With sanguine hearts commenced the cares of life,
Close to his Cot beside the public way,
A strip of unproductive waste there lay ;
This, with its owner's kind consent enclosed,
By persevering toil was soon transposed
To a gay garden, where the fertile soil,
Amplly repaid him for the pleasing toil ;—
Beside the fence a stream ran murmuring by,
Yielding in lengthened drought a sure supply,
For never summer's sun saw that pure fountain dry.
Beneath its southern border he could rear,
The earliest produce of the coming year ;
A homely shed shelter'd his swarming bees,
And all his sweetest flowers were placed near these ;
The valley lily with its pearly bells,
The damask rose whose bloom of Syria tells, .
“The yellow wall-flower stained with iron brown,”
The starry jasmine—the Imperial Crown,

And lemon-thyme, whose fragrant lowly bed,
Like injured worth, repays the hasty tread
With added odours,—larkspurs, stocks, and balm
From Gilead's mount, whose name with holy charm,
Recalls its place of birth, where every sod
Bears on its barren breast th' avenging blood of God.
Round a rude porch by untaught labour trained,
A yellow rose in lonely beauty reigned,
And oft the gardeners of the great would pause
Beside his Cot, as if to guess the cause
How there that fragile favorite could thrive,
Which all their care could scarcely keep alive,
And some with humbled feelings would depart,
And sigh to think how nature vanquished art.

At spring's return the first ripe strawberries,
The early cherries and the forward peas,
Were to a neighbouring market duly sent,
And formed a fund to meet the coming rent.
An added sum the Autumn produce brought,
For *Ashford's* fruit was diligently sought ;

Gathered with care, and free from recent rain,
'Twould keep they said "till apples grew again."
His Nonpareils were of unusual size,
And thrice his Golden Reinettes gained a prize.
When first he knew a parent's trembling joy,
He planted, on the birth-day of his boy,
A berried holly;—little William died,
The tree lived on in solitary pride;
Dressed was its border with peculiar care,
Nor ever weeds unseemly suffered there,
For with its varnished leaves and berries red,
Was linked the memory of the early dead;
Nor at the season of our Saviour's birth,
When smiling Mercy walks the grateful earth,
And every cottage window's diamond pane,
Gleams with the berried symbols of her reign,
Did sacrilegious hands presume to tear,
One verdant sprig from the rich treasure there.

How blessed are the tranquil tears we shed,
In faith and hope above our infant dead;

“In sure and certain Hope :”—in Faith whose hand
Can rend the veil that hides the promised land,
Give us to see before th’ eternal throne,
Our happy child cast his unfading crown,
Whilst lost in grateful wonder we behold,
His snow-white robes and little harp of gold,
And hear the “HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, LORD,”
By his enraptured spirit ceaseless poured ;
Oh ! blest exchange for that low lengthened moan,
Which filled our pitying ears long after life had flown.
—They made his grave close to the House of Prayer,
And never did *John Ashford* enter there,
But his eye rested on the grassy mound,
With daisies decked and briars guarded round,
Where sleeps his child till the great day shall dawn,
Which knows no night and no returning morn.

Humble his lot, in peace his days were spent,
For he had learnt to be therewith content,

Grateful to Him who kindly fix'd his state,
Far from the trials that await the great,
Unknown to fame, life's lowly path he trod,
And like th' undying Prophet "walked with God."
His treasure was in Heaven, all his care,
To lead his darling children safely there,
For this, when home returning from his toil,
He'd breathe his heart-felt prayer to God the while,
Or in the stormy winter's sleepless night,
Intreat His love to guide their steps aright ;
Each wayward temper and rebellious will,
His anxious breast with rising fears would fill ;
Fears, such as pious parents only know,
Whose trembling hearts with holiest love o'erflow ;
He watched with jealous care their heedless youth,
And joyed to see them walking in the truth.

There are who even in these latter days,
Against instruction, vain objections raise,
On all attempts this hackneyed adage fling,
"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing,"

'Once educate the children of the poor,
And willing service they will yield no more.'
Such gravely argue, 'if they're never taught
Their duties, they'll perform them as they ought.'
This is too late: with puny arm perforce,
Arrest the mountain-torrents headlong course,
Nay, realize the Syracusan's boast;
Amidst the swift revolving starry host,
Seek on some passing orb thy foot to place,
And hurl our planet into distant space,
But do not strive with impious hand to stay
The light of truth from struggling into day:—
The torrent thunders down the mountain side,
Be it thy care its headlong course to guide,
For it must bless and fertilize our land,
Or strew with fearful wrecks the storm-crush'd strand.

The 'little knowledge' which *John Ashford* gained,
Was at the village Sunday-School obtained,

Where our good Vicar taught the poor to know
Their humble duties and perform them too.
'Twas there he learnt the Word of God to read,
'To hurt nobody or by word or deed,
To be in all his dealings true and just,
And in his Heavenly Father put his trust,
To love Him too with all his heart and mind,
And soul and strength, and be to others kind.'
Can knowledge such as this life's order break,
Or lead the poor their duties to forsake?

No doubtful doctrine did his Pastor teach,
Faith without works, or human merit preach,
He had the witness in himself and knew
By blest experience that His word was true.
With David's prayer he would his Bible read,
Nor with "The Fathers" e'er perplex'd his creed,
Not gown for surplice he in preaching changed,
Nor unlit tapers on the altar ranged;
Benches and pews not yet had war declared,
Nor outward signs the Saviour's merits shared,

No massy cross adorned the sacred shrine,
No "credence table" held the bread and wine,
No smiling foes had then delighted view'd
Pastor and flock in strange unseemly feud;
In place of these were peace and love and rest,
The Church united and her children blest.

With pictured Priests and Holy Prophets gay,
On *Ashford's* shelf a time-worn Bible lay,
His father's fathers who with pious care,
Their children's births and deaths had entered there,
As smiles or tears chequered life's changing scene,
With joys that were, and griefs that once had been
A record of the dead in years gone by,
To teach the living how to live and die.
In weal or woe whatever might betide,
This was his friend—his counsellor—his guide !
Next to the Holy Book in his esteem,
Was old JOHN BUNYAN's dear delightful dream ;

He traced the Pilgrim's progress from the hour
When first he felt the Spirit's quick'ning power
Leading him forth from children, friends, and home
That he might fly from the dread wrath to come
Till death's dark river he desponding past,
And reached the Holy City safe at last !
His heart went with him all the narrow road
That "Christian" journeyed on his way to God.
The slough of Despond he had struggled through,
By keeping still the Wicket-gate in view ;
Weary and heavy laden, sin-distress'd,
He at the Cross had found the promised rest ;
He too had known the Pilgrim's grief of mind,
When once in Doubting Castle close confined,
And verging on the confines of Despair,
Had well nigh perished by the Giant there.
When fierce Apollyon with his fiery breath
Prest trembling "Christian" nigh unto the death ;—
In the dark valley where the foul fiends sought
To vex his soul with their blasphemous thought ;

Or when on the far mountain's top-most height
He saw the heavenly City bathed in light,
As in a map, *John Ashford* there could trace,
His *own* experience in the ways of Grace.

Not his the faith that leaves life's duties still,
Alike undone, or doing does them ill ;
In rural toil through all the country round,
Ashford's superior could be rarely found ;
"Lord of the Harvest" by consent he reigned,
And well that post of honor he maintained ;
Few could a straighter cleaner furrow draw,
And as an umpire, *Ashford's* word was law.³
It was his gen'rous master's pride and joy,
To find his labourers regular employ ;
Whate'er the season, drought or rain or frost,
Through fault of his, an hour they rarely lost ;
He would not on a wet unkindly day,
Unfeeling send them to their homes away,
Nor hardly on their scanty wages press,
With grasping hand to make their little less ;

Should other toil in trying winters fail,
There still remained the shelt'ring barn and flail,
For this, the grain was stored with thoughtful care,
And always threshed by manual labour there.

Once in the year, a day was set apart
To test the skilful ploughman's useful art;
On that occasion labour did its best,
Chesnuts and Greys with ceaseless care were drest,
In expectation of th' eventful morn,
Long hours of toil and many a feed of corn
Were freely given, that when they took their place
They might not in a neighbour's smiling face
Read the mute record of their own disgrace :—
Sleek were their fav'rite steeds, and great the pains
Taken to deck their braided tails and manes,
And as they stroked their sides, each rival's eye,
Glanced proudly on th' admiring passers by.
The village champions who had prizes won,
Together classed, the friendly strife begun,

Then followed those, who, strangers yet to fame,
Preferred with beating hearts their doubtful claim,
Whilst sturdy Ploughboys 'drove their teams afield,'
As proudly as their sceptres, Monarchs wield.
—Th' important day rose beautifully bright,
The clear sky shone with autumn's own blue light,
The thorny bramble's rip'ning fruit was seen
In all its varying hues from black to green ;
The hawthorn bough its scarlet berries hung
Full to the sun, and round its stem there clung
The wild clematis with its feathery seed,
Whilst twined with gossamer, each bush and weed
In autumn's sober livery looked down
In tawny orange deep'ning into brown.
The household robin from the dew-decked spray
Piped to the closing year his farewell lay,
No other sound in the still air was heard
Save now and then the Ploughman's guiding word
As his sharp share cut thro' the yielding sward.

The contest over, at the social board,
The rustic victors claimed their proud reward ;
Loud plaudits rang thro' all th' assembled throng,
When *Ashford* came the foremost ranks among.
With every prize was wholesome counsel given,
And words of cheer to all who well had striven,
That each should do his duty in that state
In which it had pleased God to fix his fate.
Humble the triumph, but did Cæsar feel
As pure a joy thro' his proud bosom steal,
When mighty Rome her countless thousands poured,
And hailed him empire's universal lord ?

When rains untimely bent the ripening grain
Day after day, and deluged all the plain,
Till every heart was filled with anxious fear
For the ungarner'd produce of the year,
Ashford's confiding spirit still would rise
Superior to the soul-depressing skies ;

With cheerful hope he'd wait the changing moon,
Whose strange mysterious influence was soon
To chase the watery particles again,
And bring the welcome sunbeams in her train.
When that reed failed him, he would turn and look
For consolation in the Holy Book,
Where stands th' eternal promise firm and sure,
'Whilst sun and moon and day and night endure,
Seed-time and Harvest never more shall fail,
Nor o'er th' undelug'd earth the restless waves prevail.'
From *Ashford's* faith and hope, they learnt to wait
His time, whose succour never comes too late.

Knowledge to him was as a sealed book,
Yet on the face of Nature he would look
With the same fond enthusiastic eye
As those whose burning words can never die.
He loved to mark her ever-varying form,
The summer's fleecy clouds—the winter's awful storm.
The opening blossoms of the early spring,
Would to his soul his boyhood's freshness bring;

When the bright sun sunk to his golden rest,
The gorgeous colours of the glowing west
Filled with a silent joy his swelling breast
Till his eyes swam with tears of thankfulness,
He had no words—no language to express.
But chief the Sabbath-day was his delight,
And every hour was precious in his sight;
His children too were taught to love it best,
And gladly welcome the sweet day of rest;
For this, each little treat he could afford,
By frugal toil was always kindly stored :
The Picture Bible on that sacred day,
Upon the old oak table open lay
That all might look at the engravings there
And read the sacred page with reverential care.
It was indeed a pleasant sight to see
The christian father with his family,
Wending their way towards the old church tower,
Thro' cowslip meads and hawthorns full in flower,

For let who would forsake the House of Prayer
For some new light, *Ashford* was constant there,
And when the village choir were called to raise
Their voices to the Great Creator's praise,
His simple flute led their untutored lays.
Between the services the text was read,
The collect and the catechism said,
Or, seated on the happy parent's knee,
The youngest lisped, "how doth the busy bee ;"
And meekly kneeling at the daylights' close,
Their mingled prayers like evening incense rose.

Oh England ! just and merciful as great,
Is it for thee to render desolate
A home like this ? When God's afflicting hand,
Has touched the poor is it for thee to stand
Selfishly cold and all relief deny,
Save that which severs every sacred tie
That binds their suff'ring souls to home and thee ?
Blest for their sake—respect their poverty ;

Compel no more thy officers to steel
Their hearts 'gainst patient merit's meek appeal ;
With pity's tear still trembling in their eye,
Instruct them not to pass their misery by,
All unregarded as the clam'rous cries
Of reckless idleness, or shameless vice.
Thy mighty hand extended cross the waves,
Has shook the fetters from thy distant slaves ;
Let not thy free-born sons imploring stand,
Like haughty Pharoah's famine-stricken band,
And barter children, wives, and home for bread,
Ere they can be by thy harsh bounty fed.
Is it a christian duty thus to make
The Pauper's home repulsive, till it shake
The strongest nerve—and break the bleeding heart ?
Then well hast thou performed a christian part.
Over its portals is inscribed "Despair,"
And death is feared far less than entering there.
Health, that first blessing of our earthly lot,
No more is welcomed to the poor man's cot,

He knows the pitying Guardians gladly seize
On the first feeble symptoms of disease
To grant with willing hand the scant supply,
They must to needy health at once deny.
The restless moan of sick'ning infancy
Seeking for ease the mother's trembling knee,
Rock'd to and fro with love's foreboding fears,
The Father, gracious God ! unpitying hears ;
In his child's wail—his sick wife's silent grief,
He reads his wretched title to relief,
And if at last some parting drops he shed,
Mourns for the *living*, more than for the dead.
—Can nature's springs be poisoned at their source
And still the stream hold on its healthy course ?
Then from the Peasant's hunger-harden'd heart,
Bid all his better feelings thus depart ;
He who can listen to his children's cry,
With selfish pleasure in his sunken eye—
Steep in their bitter tears his daily bread,
And by their mis'ry see his household fed,

Will still respect his neighbour's guarded right,
And grandeur's gold be sacred in his sight ;
He will not, goaded to the desp'rate strife,
Be quite regardless of his weary life,
Nor dare to place with mad revengeful hand,
Beside the garner'd grain, the flaming brand.

Not till the heaving earth gives up its dead
Will all the boding tears the poor have shed,
The pain, the anguish, and the haunting dread
Which fill their thoughts by day, their dreams by night
And keep "The House" for ever in their sight
Be known to men ;—now, to the pitying skies,
Their silent uncomplaining griefs arise,
Heard by that God who makes the poor his care,
Who heeds their cry—attends their feeble prayer,
Who pities those who truly pity them
Nor in the judgment will their souls condemn
But count as offerings precious in His sight,
The cup of water and the widow's mite !

—Alas ! how prone we are when fully blest,
Soon to forget that this is not our rest ;
Then Heaven in mercy sends us needful pain,
To break the links of earth's enduring chain,
To teach us, with each slowly gath'ring tear
That we have 'no abiding city here.'

When sickness takes the Peasant's strength away,
Who has not seen him struggling day by day,
With honest poverty and manly pride,
For his dear children vainly to provide ?
—Who has not seen the nerveless arm sink down,
When the high spirit still would urge it on ?
—Who has not seen this fruitless struggle end
In ruin so complete—death seemed a friend ?
Oh ! many a prayer *John Ashford* offered up,
That God would spare him that last bitter cup ;
That he might earn his independent bread,
Nor ever be by parish bounty fed.

Vain was the wish, for ling'ring sickness came,
Shook like a reed the strong man's iron frame,
And all his little earnings soon were spent
In food and med'cine, and arrears of rent ;—
True he had friends ; but want, day after day
Like drops on stones, wears charity away.
He had for years a monthly payment made
To a small club, formed it was said to aid
Th' industrious poor and kindly to assuage
The ills that wait on sickness and old age ;
'Twas "un-enrolled," the law could not enforce
Defective rules : it was dissolved of course,
And on its fraudulent ruins one was raised
From which the sick and aged were erased,
Whose payments made in poverty and woe,
Amidst privations such as few can know
Were squandered all :—this left him quite forlorn :
Then one by one his goods were placed in pawn ;
The 'Cuckoo Clock,' to all the household dear,
Which told of Spring throughout the changeful year ;

Oft gathering round, they with mute wonder heard
It strike the hour, and imitate the bird :—
The old oak-chest his aged Mother gave,
Her last bequest when sinking to the grave,
So long preserved in memory of the dead,
Was barter'd now, to find his Children bread.
The time-worn Bible yet alone remained
Of all their household wreck ; it had sustained
His sinking soul through trials, doubts, and fears,
And many a leaf was blistered with his tears :
Sad was the Sunday, when, the service done,
He took his sobbing children one by one
Upon his knees, that they might once more look
At the large prints that graced the Holy Book.
Precept and promise marked with pious care
By the loved dead, in faded lines were there,
Appealing records of the faith He gave
Their trusting souls in prospect of the grave,
And as he turned its sacred pages o'er,
So full of comfort to the suff'ring poor,

The clouds of unbelief awhile would part,
And gleams of sunshine cheer his fainting heart.
Sharp was the struggle, but the daily cry
"Bread Father, bread," and the half smothered sigh
Which from his patient partner's withered breast
Whispered of mis'ry louder than the rest,
Its fate decided :—'twas his last resource,
Yet self-reproach and undeserved remorse,
Haunted his homeward steps and every day,
Disturb'd his troubled mind when he knelt down to pray.

When this was spent, he must assistance ask,
Nor further shrink from the degrading task :
With utter poverty shame struggled long,
Ere he could muster strength to face the throng
Of needy applicants that crowd the gates,
Where helpless want, in patient sadness waits !
Returning health had faintly tinged his cheek,
But left him still with spirits low and weak ;—

Thronged was the Board-room on the audience day,
And scarcely could he force his weary way
Through the dense mass, who yet to him were kind;—
’Tis from the poor, the poor their pity find;
Oft had they shared with him their scanty meal,
With hearts that kindred woes had taught to feel!

A hectic flush across his features passed
When, long delayed, his turn arrived at last,
And manhood strove, but vainly strove to hide
The last sad tears of fast departing pride;—
His was an artless tale—yet kindly heard,
‘He had been sick,—expences had incurred
Beyond his little means, and would they give
Some trifling help t’ enable him to live
In that old Cottage where his life begun,
And where he hoped his latest sands would run?
He now felt able to resume his toil,
And would repay them yet a little while.’

—The Guardian for his Parish, kindly prayed
That they would grant the Man some little aid ;
Told of his industry in time of health,
How honest labour was his only wealth ;
Spoke of his worth, which all the village knew,
And what to suffering worth is always due !
—A friendly feeling, generous and strong
Spread through the Board—they felt it must be wrong
The slender pittance harshly to refuse,
But they, alas ! were left no power to choose ;
The Man was able by his work to live,
And further aid, it was not their's to give ;—
They offer'd him “The House,” “or they would take
Two of his children, for their Father's sake.”

The poor Man's heart sunk in him as he heard
Their last resolve ; each kind consoling word
Unheeded fell, he slowly turned aside,
The tear of mental agony to hide,
Back to his bare-walled cottage took his way,
And wept with those he loved, the tedious night away.

Awhile they struggled on, all loth to break
Their household band, the proffered aid to take ;
Doled out their scanty bread with frugal care,
Like famish'd ship-wreck'd Seamen, share by share ;—
This could not last ;—then came the dreaded day,
When they would send a part at least away ;
But crowding round, the weeping children hung
Upon his knees, or to his garments clung ;—
“Father!” “dear Father!” “Oh not me!” “not me!”
Each wildly shrieked in childish agony ;
The youngest clasped her little hands, and prayed
She might not go—“I shall be so afraid
In the dark night, dear Mother, when I wake,
And you not there your little Jane to take.”

Her apron-folds close pressed upon her face,
Through which the oozing tears you still might trace,
And hear the stifled sobs, her frame that rent ;
The Mother on her Husband's shoulder leant,

Till all her weak resolve again gave way,
“She would decide upon some future day
Which should be left, and which be sent away.”
Unable still to sever love’s strong tie,
They would together live—together die.

Could his exhausted frame have known repose,
His harrassed mind a respite from its woes,
Had but the aid that wasted strength requires,
When baffled in the strife disease retires,
Been timely given, perchance he had retrieved
His ruined fortunes and fresh hopes conceived ;
The kind physician too, whose open door
Freely received the sick and suff’ring poor,
Gave his opinion, that the crisis past,
With rest and care he would recover fast,
But anxious to redeem affliction’s hours,
He tasked too soon his yet enfeebled powers,

The pitying partners of his painful toil,
With friendly hands assisting him the while.
Scarce had he strength the sweeping scythe to wield
When first he took his place in mead and field,
Faint from the bed of sickness, to renew
By contact with the early fogs and dew,
His hectic cough and its attendant pain,
His sleepless nights and languid days again,
Th' attempted toil and the damp chilling air,
Defeating all his fond wife's thoughtful care.

Summer and Harvest thus they struggled through,
Then Winter came, and o'er their prospects threw
His gloomiest mantle :—pinched in food and fire,
Hope's flickering embers did at length expire,
And all the finer feelings of the Soul
Wither'd beneath their hunger's fierce controul.
Groping 'midst refuse heaps, and things unclean,
The starving children might be daily seen,
Contending oft with loud and clam'rous cries
For rinds and parings as a costly prize,

Or roots, which from incipient decay,
The neighbouring cottagers had cast away.
Their wretched bed was all which still remained,
And for arrears of rent that was distrained,
Forth from their little cottage rudely driven,
They sought such shelter as the law had given.

Sad was the parting on the mournful day,
When from their childhood's home they took their way;
Endear'd to them by all that they had known
Of joy's brief smile,—or sorrow's ling'ring frown,
The holly-tree in happier days he set,
Bright with its scarlet berries flourished yet,
But all beside was desolate and bare,
The faint reflection of his own despair:
How blest their early dead, now safe at home,
In mercy taken from the ills to come.

Oh! it is easy in life's tranquil day,
When all around is peace, to kneel and pray,
“*Father! thy will be done,*” but when that will,
Calls us to suffer and be patient still;

When God's mysterious ways are all unknown,
When clouds and darkness veil his awful throne ;
Oh ! how we need His all-supporting hand,
To bow submissive to the high command,
To trust Him still, in life's beclouded day,
And in meek resignation thus to pray.

They knelt together in that parting hour,
And humbly prayed that God would give them power
Still to hold on in faith their darksome way,
Till sorrow's night should close in endless day.
—"Break not the bruised reed, but let us see,
As is our day, that so our strength shall be."
At first, with faltering accents weak and low,
And choked with tears that would unbidden flow,
The Christian Father prayed ; but when he told
Of all God's goodness to his Saints of old,
How His own Son, a life of suffering led,
And had on earth, not where to lay His head ;
Spake of those Mansions in the starry sky,
Prepared for them who on His love rely ;

How all their light afflictions would be blest,
And serve to sweeten their eternal rest ;—
Then clear and strong his grateful accents rose,
And they forgot their suff'rings and their woes,
A stream of glory lit that lowly room,
For Faith and Hope had chased the midnight gloom,
And as they rose from their accepted prayer,
They felt indeed, that God was present there !

“The night was winter in its roughest mood,”
And drifted snow filled all the trackless road ;
Like spectres in their glitt'ring vests of white,
The low trees gleamed in the dim morning light ;
But when the slanting sunbeams on them fell,
How beautiful was hill and plain and dell.
The angry Genius of the raging storm,
Had piled the mass in every varying form,
As fleecy wool with countless diamonds strewn,
It here and there with blinding brightness shone ;

Hurled by his giant hands in heaps, it lay
Like sculptured marble in the sunny ray,
Or hung in beauteous wreaths upon the bending spray;
As if the hand of all destroying Time,
Had torn from ruin'd Athens' classic clime,
Her monuments of glory and decay,
And cast the fragments in the public way.

How kindly has the will of bounteous heaven,
To helpless age its wasted feelings given;
As one by one life's latest joys depart,
Less and less keenly thrills the time-sear'd heart :
The tott'ring Grandsire first prepared to go,^s
Left his bare foot-prints in the yielding snow ;
The Mother, 'mongst her shiv'ring children shared
The scanty clothing which their wants had spared,
Although her own, scarce hid her wasted form,
She felt not, heeded not the driving storm ;
Her moaning infant's restless lips she prest,
With hopeless fondness to her failing breast,

Then hand in hand without a sigh or tear,
They sought their Prison-home and entered there.

The Sabbath rose ! E'en from his earliest days
It woke in him the voice of joy and praise,
When floating sweetly o'er the quiet dells,
Came the glad music of its welcome bells !
—In after years he loved the House of Prayer,
And led betimes his willing children there ;
Now, when he heard from far the bell's slow toll,
The iron entered deep into his soul,
To think the Temple of his Saviour's grace,
Was nought to him but a forbidden place :
Hard thoughts of God and Man a moment cast,
Their evil influence, but as quickly past,
And memory took her flight, away—away—
Through buried hopes to that far distant day,
When his glad feet the cowslip meadow trod,
Beside his Father, to the House of God !

Like Israel's banished Monarch, his tired soul
Long'd for the courts where living waters roll,
—There the free swallow makes her happy nest,
But there his wounded spirit may not rest!

Oh! if earth hold one consecrated spot
Where all the six day's trouble enters not;
Where pain and poverty forget to weep,
And Faith and Hope their constant vigils keep,
Pointing the mourner to his home on high,
Where every tear is wiped from every eye,
It is the Poor Man's CHURCH! He enters there,
And casts upon his God his every care;
No murmuring thought arises as he views
Afar the canopied and cushioned pews;
From his low station in the crowded aisle,
With grateful heart he humbly thinks the while,
"A few more rolling years and I shall rest,
From all my toils on my Redeemer's breast:"
—He learns to look with Faith's untiring eyes,
Up to his mansion in the far-off skies;

Eye hath not seen nor ear hath ever heard,
Nor heart conceived what God hath there prepared
For those who love Him with a perfect love
And all their heart's affections set above.

Whilst earthly blest, the thoughtless and the gay,
Find their reward in this life's little day,
Through tribulation's straight and narrow road,
He wends 'mid sighs and tears his way to God !
"Poor and afflicted," was his Master's lot,
The Poor Man knows it, and he murmurs not,
But as he walks with pain this vale of tears,
A prey to all the ills our nature fears,
Deny him not the solace God has given,
To dry his tears and aid his way to Heaven ;—
Enough of ill surrounds his rugged path,
Man need not add the vials of his wrath,
Nor let these prison walls their shadow throw
O'er his vexed soul, and suff'ring body too.

Full was the House, for orders were received,
That none should now be out of it relieved,
Save in such cases of extreme distress,
As scarce sufficed to make the suffering less.
Increasing numbers choked the wards by day,
But when in crowded rooms the paupers lay,
Their mingled breath, offensive foul and close
Through the long tedious wintry night's repose,
Hung in damp vapours round each narrow bed ;
It seem'd the Charnel of the fest'ring dead
To him who entered from a purer air,
And told of fever surely lurking there.

When the first burst of agony is o'er,
And hope has left them to return no more,
Then comes that fearful apathy of mind,
Which can relief in no employment find.
Cow'ring together from the wintry blast,
In sad companionship their time is passed ;

The budding beauties of returning spring,
Can to their withered hearts no freshness bring ;
Through half the live long tedious summer's day,
The aged paupers doze their lives away,
Or prostrate on the sunny benches lie,
Watching the marbled clouds flit cross the azure sky.
Hour after hour they listless gaze, with nought
To stir the dull monotony of thought,
Save the loud dinner bell whose empty sound
Rings, as in mockery, its noisy round,
Or on the "board day" when the guardians meet,
They catch the hurried tread of passing feet,
Wak'ning vain yearnings for the homeward dells,
And fresh green fields where haunting mem'ry dwells,
Spared by confinement from the keener pain
Of seeing kindness tendered them in vain ;
For midst their abject and degraded lot,
They are not quite neglected and forgot,
Some pitying neighbour or some early friend,
Out of their poverty will freely send

Bread from the gleaner's corn—the Indian weed,
A few spare pence pinched from their utmost need ;
Touching memorials of abiding love,
In God's remembrance registered above,
Tho' here rejected, not less kindly meant,
That the "House rules" defeat the kind intent.

The Sabbath Bell had ceased, the House of Prayer
Was thronged with crowds who knelt in gladness there ;
John Ashford listened, but the sound no more
To his vex'd ear the fitful breezes bore :
Debarr'd the Temple of his Saviour's grace,
He sought the semblance of that sacred place.

Spacious and high the Chapel-walls arose,
The Paupers' seats were ranged in equal rows ;
One stately Pew above them all was raised,
Alike for honour and convenience praised,
For there the Master duly took his stand
With large gilt Prayer-Book open in his hand,

Intent to mark each wand'ring glance, and hear
The slightest whisper breathed in sorrow's ear ;
The Pastor's Reading-desk, beside it stood,
With curious carvings on the polished wood,
And velvet cushion placed with costly care,
To give the Chapel-walls a Church-like air :—
There, might be seen, companions in distress,
Each varied form of human wretchedness ;
There, came the aged poor with palsied frame :—
The mother, with her child of sin and shame,
And as she bent to kiss its pale thin face,
Oh, what a tale of misery we trace !
Along the past, regretful memory strays,
Led by the ling'ring light of better days
Back to her cottage-home, again she sees
The snow-drops rise beneath the tall elm trees,
The woodbine twining round her father's door,
And the kind faces she must see no more ;
The first sweet violets of the early spring,
Affection's offering, *he* was wont to bring,

Whom still she loves, tho' in her hour of need
When hearts guilt-harden'd, nature gives to bleed,
Basely refused a mother's timely aid;
Her fond hopes crushed—deserted and betrayed.
Whom still she loves—tho' glorying in his shame,
He points his heartless jest at her once cherished name.

The wily Poacher, who in copse or wood,
The boldest Keepers, had for years withstood,
Whose nightly boast it was, that he could rove
Thro' every game-preserve, and well-watched grove—
And not a pheasant, or a single hare,
Escape his certain aim or well-set snare.
The winter frost and summer sun had stained
His broad bluff features,—and there still remained
The deep-cut scars, which time wears not away,
The marks of many a bloody nightly fray;
Sullen and fierce, the seeds of discontent
He loves to sow, and angry feuds foment;

Each just reproof inflames his mind the more,
'Gainst those, "who grind the faces of the Poor,"
And evil passions, force cannot controul,
Are rankling deep in his revengeful soul;—
But now with palsied form and stiff'ning limb,
His blood-shot eyes, with age and riot dim—
The pest and curse of all the Village round,
Within these walls a wretched refuge found!

How painful 'tis progressively to trace
The youthful labourer's rapid downward race,
From that sad hour when first the snare he set,
Or caught the flutt'ring partridge in his net.
The moral boundary 'twixt wrong and right,
Is soon o'erleaped whene'er the fence is slight;
The thoughtless youth who would with horror shrink
From downright plunder, does not, cannot think
That the wild bird which flits as free as air,
And seeks its food and shelter everywhere,

Can, like the folded lamb or cag'd dove, be
A doubtful owner's rightful property.
He breaks the law, with slight or no remorse,
And the law takes its desolating course :
Convey'd reluctant to the county gaol,
(He has no means to pay, and none to bail)
He enters tremblingly the prison door,
With little actual guilt save that of being poor,
Too sure within th' infected walls to find,
Companions old in sin and well inclined
To sow the seeds of vice in virgin soil,
Where soon they root and mock all after toil.
When his three months imprisonment is o'er,
He home returns,—to honest toil no more ;
Eager to practice all he there was taught,
Law and the law's restraint he sets at naught,
His former scruples vanish one by one,
And the young Poacher soon is all undone.
Could he, like Israel's weeping Prophet see,⁶
Through the dim future, all he'll one day be,

How would he turn abhorrent from the trade
For which such fearful sacrifice is made.
Whether the price that every year is paid
In moral worth and honesty decayed,
The desolated hearth—the household band
Scattered abroad the troublers of the land,
The nightly conflicts, the warm life-blood shed,
Staining so oft the green turf crimson red,
The victors dying and the vanquished dead ;—
Whether the game thus saved is worth the cost,
Let them decide through whom those lives are lost,
And if a rising doubt should be expressed,
Conscience will set the dubious point at rest.

The Fisher too, the patient Angler's dread,
Who with his nets oft dragged the river's bed,
Enclosing fry of every size and name,—
Perch, roach, pike, carp, tench, gudgeons, eels, or bream,
Yet of them all, not one was ever known
Back to its native stream, repentant thrown ;

To all remonstrance, *George* would archly say,
“They will not come again if turned away;
“If young they’re tender, and though small are sweet,
“And what I cannot sell, why I can eat!”

With pail of living fish, he, day by day,
Towards the neighbouring town would take his way,
And holding by the gills some monster prize,
Dilate upon its beauty, weight, and size;—
Throughout the year our streams of fish he drained,
And thus a scanty livelihood obtained:

When winter’s frost had crusted o’er the pool,
He might be seen, upon his three-legged stool,
In his old cottage, where the winds of heaven
The paper’d pane and mould’ring thatch had riven,
Unravelling many a noose and tangled line,
Or mending nets, with balls of various twine:
Thus, like the Otter, all his days were past
Beside the reedy pool—compelled at last
By age and want, with many a bitter sigh
For his lost freedom, *George* came here to die.

Here too, oh mock'ry ! are "their country's pride,"
Seeking in vain shame's burning blush to hide,
Task'd and confin'd in freedom's boasted clime,
As harden'd felons expiate a crime,
We miss the fetters for the limbs design'd,
But these are laid on the degraded mind.
—Amidst the cultivators of our land
Discord had thrown her fierce destructive brand,
The owner of the most productive farm,
At falling prices caught unwise alarm,
Mingled with jealous fears that some there were,
Who of the 'surplus labour' took no share,
Though these alas ! lacked not the ready will,
But wanted means their stubborn soil to till.
To kind remonstrance or to sharp reproof,
With temper stern he stood alike aloof,
Discharg'd his labourers while winter reign'd,
Reckless by whom or where they were maintained :
Throughout the parish e'en from door to door,
They sought th' employment, they could find no more.

Oh ! swiftly then the downward path they trod,
Which led them far from happiness and God ;
Forced from the farm where from their boyish days
The crops of yellow grain they help'd to raise,
Till every cowslip-mead and waving grove,
By long acquaintance, they had learnt to love ;
Willing to toil, unable work to find,
An angry feeling rankled in each mind.
True, learned sages said, "from nature's feast
Th' intruding guests must be at once releas'd,
That the 'preventive check' alone could stay
The swarming mass from sweeping all away,
For earth's productive powers could not keep pace
With the swift increase of the human race :"
They saw the cottager's allotment field,
Beneath the spade a ten-fold produce yield,
Then turn'd repining to those half-till'd lands,
Which wanted but the labour of their hands,
To fill the barns with harvest's grateful store,
And bring contentment to the poor man's door.'

They listen'd whilst the village wand'rer told
Of other climes rich with ungather'd gold,—
Of distant worlds across the western wave,
Where fortune waits to bless th' advent'rous brave,
Unwilling still those trackless wilds to roam,
They strangely clung to their unhappy home,
Its early joys o'ershadowed now with care,
They met repinings and harsh murmurs there ;
Shame, void of guilt, the shame of idleness,
Redden'd the sallow cheek, and stern distress
Struggling with health's fierce hunger, beckon'd still
The starving wretch to seek the ways of ill,
To watch the pheasants' haunt—to track the hare—
To drag the net—to plant the wily snare ;
Precursors these of darker deadlier deeds,
For fast the foot from virtue's path recedes.

Sent to break stones upon the highway side,
That first and fatal blow to honest pride,

To wheel them needlessly from place to place,
As if to advertise their own disgrace,
Then yoked unseemly to the cumbrous load
Of silt collected on the public road,
Or stationed in the gravel-pit, to find
By daily contact with the guilty mind,
Some desp'rate lawless channel of relief,
Regardless that the felon's gains are brief,
His punishment swift, lasting, and severe ;
With naught to hope and little left to fear,
He learns to look on any change, as sure
To leave him less to suffer and endure ;
'Tis his in sullen silence all day long,
To brood o'er real and imagin'd wrong,
At night, wet cold and hungry to depart,
With mis'ry's madness rankling in his heart,
To make his wretched home more wretched still,
And quench love's feeble flame by wrong and ill.
Degraded in his own and others eyes,
All self-respect within the peasant dies ;

His manly spirit crush'd, his fair fame lost,
Life's opening prospects thus for ever crost,
His better garments, once his Sunday pride,
When with his Mary smiling by his side,
Early to Church he took his constant way,
The warbling lark less light of heart than they,
Were either pawned reluctantly or sold ;—
A vacant place we in his pew behold ;—
He sought "The House" in desperate despair,
And wastes his strength in picking Oakum there !
Hope, the last refuge of the wretched, flies
His gloomy cell, or if she enter, dies ;
He feels his dream of happiness is o'er,
Should full employ be offer'd him once more,
In vain would labour's sweat-drops dew his brow,
His little cottage is another's now,
He has no shelter for his helpless charge
And their fond mother, if again at large,
No frugal means fresh household goods to buy,—
He must a pauper live, a pauper die.

The sturdy beggar, whom we used to meet,
Collecting alms along the crowded street ;
Thrusting his wounds disgustingly in view
Our pity and reproof exciting too :—
With his small wares to cheat the eye of power,
He begged his idle bread from door to door ;
His wallet, stored with tracts, all kindly given
In hopes to lead some thoughtless soul to heaven,
But there concealed, the profligate might find,
The impure ballad to inflame the mind ;—
Thus God and Mammon, he for years had tried
Vainly to serve, still floating with the tide,
By both forsaken in his hour of need,
Forced, like the prodigal, on husks to feed,
Unable longer with his wares to trade,
He sought the refuge for the wretched made.

—The orphan, with her face of early care ;—
And the poor idiot, happier far was there,

His constant smile of wild unmeaning joy,
Years cannot quench, nor poverty destroy ;
Ah ! little deem'd his mother that her son,
Whose life, in ease and affluence begun,
Would in the Poor-house find a pauper's end,
Unaided by one single summer friend.
No sense of shame, no care, no woe he feels,
Far other thoughts his stately home reveals ;
His prison-walls to him a palace seem,
And he enjoys the wild delightful dream :
When one departs, it is his act of grace,
Each fresh arrival in the crowded place
Fills him with joy, he greets the stranger guest,
And loves to see him in his livery drest ;
The board-room is his splendid hall of state,
Where his great lords and titled servants wait,—
The Sabbath is his weekly levee day,
And when the paupers humbly kneel to pray,
He thinks the chapel is his audience-room,
Where they, to offer trembling homage come.

Oh, when does reason with her boasted powers,
Give to her followers such delightful hours ?
His vacant eyes still on the master wait,
Whom he esteems his minister of state ;
With mimic pomp he in his presence stands,
And gravely issues impotent commands ;
Pleased with his harmless ways he lets him stay,
And will not drive the simple youth away
To that all-wretched isolated room,
Where none but helpless, hopeless idiots come,
Where, like the beasts that perish, are confined
The awful ruins of the immortal mind.

The roving outcast, tarrying but a day,
Here bent his stubborn knees, unused to pray,
Then, to his haunts of vice, rejoicing flew,
His goodness transient as the morning dew.

And here too, came the plague-spot of the whole,
The village infidel—whose tainted soul

Whilst youth, and health, and brutal strength remained,
By every grovelling vice was darkly stained ;
He eyed his prison-walls with proud disdain,
And longed to run his evil course again !
Oh ! with what ease the seeds of vice take root,
Swift is their growth and plentiful their fruit,
Whilst virtue slowly rises day by day,
And fades at every adverse blast away :—
He, to their real, adds imagined woes,
And fostered thus, each evil passion grows ;
His the coarse joke—the vile and whispered word,
Vexing the ear, that still reluctant heard ;—
Though in the Chapel-room, his impious jest,
Not even there could wholly be suppressed,
As loud he read the prayer “*For all that are oppressed,*”⁸
And his quick glance and bitter smile implied
They were the wretches kneeling by his side.

The lonely Widow came ;—long mournful years
Had almost drained the fountain of her tears,—

With faltering step, but firm and trusting heart,
Her lamp bright burning, ready to depart ;
Time's restless scythe, with strokes severely kind,
Had severed link by link, the chains that bind
The soul to earth—nor left a living thing,
To which her widowed heart could fondly cling ;
“The world forgetting, by the world forgot,”
Her's is the lowly mind that murmurs not ;
A few more setting suns, and all her pain
Will only like a troubled dream remain,
Though heaviness endure throughout the night
Yet joy still cometh with the morning light :—
She knows, for firm th' Eternal promise stands,
She has a house not made by mortal hands,
A glorious mansion in the starry sky,
And yearns with meek submissive will to die :
Yet patient, waiting till her Lord shall come
To call His long expectant servant home,
Where there is no more death or sin to fear,
For God shall wipe away the mourner's tear.

The broken-hearted wife in anguish pined⁹
Apart from him who was by God designed
Her stay 'till death, in sickness and in health,
Whose changeless love had been her only wealth,
He shared her sorrows, dried her falling tears,
Sooth'd the infirmities of lengthen'd years,
Knelt by her side at morn and evening prayer,
Forgetful of the world's unkindness there ;
Now, when her weak and helpless age requires
The kind attention long regard inspires,
Lost in the crowd with vacant gaze she stands,
Grasping her time-worn staff with trembling hands ;
She had no earthly friend, no kindred left,
When of her husband's constant aid bereft,
Oh ! how her lonely anguish seems to crave
His last sad care to lead her to her grave.

The noble-minded poor, whose lives had past
Unstained by parish alms, reduced at last
For some relief, reluctant to apply,
Received permission in "The House" to die.

The ruined trader, left without a friend,
Or aught which he could borrow, pawn, or spend,
Who in his youth, far better days had known,
Now reaped the harvest he himself had sown.

The hopeless deaf, still took their usual place
Close to the fountain of their Saviour's grace,
Raised their imploring eyes and watched with pain
The moving lips that moved for them in vain.

Here the blind mother, guided by the hand
Of her dear girl, took her accustomed stand,
And as she *felt* the presence of her child,
She raised her sightless eyes to heaven and smiled,
With grateful heart, that God *one* comfort gave
To light her darksome passage to the grave,
For in compassion to her want of sight,
Mother and child they part not, day nor night.

The halt and maim'd, whose race was almost run,
Dragged their weak limbs and entered one by one,—
The wreck of toil-worn men whose life of care
No other home could for their age prepare,

At every step a helping hand they crave,
"Poor human ruins tott'ring o'er the grave."

Almighty Father, look with pitying eye
On this amount of human misery—
On all the wreck and ruin sin hath made
And let Thy Spirit their weak efforts aid,
As at Bethesda's Angel-troubled pool,
Descend and make the wounded spirit whole ;
Oh ! let them from the furnace of affliction come
Like fire-tried gold, to their eternal home.

John Ashford entered ! 'Twas a chilling place,
All so unlike the Temple of His grace
Where he was wont to mingle praise and prayer,
With kind familiar faces gather'd there,
That as he gazed upon the stranger scene,
Felt what he was, and what he once had been,
From out the fountain of his gushing heart,
Regretful tears would all unbidden start—

Tears such as fell from Israel's aged eyes,
When they beheld the second Temple rise,¹⁰
And thought of that all-glorious abode,
Where they, in early childhood walked with God.

What though forbid to tread the House of Prayer,
And with th' assembled people worship there,
Yet here at least they may together kneel,
Mingle their prayers and kindred misery feel;
Their six days solitude and sorrow past,
The parted paupers here may meet at last,
For the sweet peace which marks the Sabbath day,
The hand of power has not quite rent away.

The mother, with a feeling almost joy,
May once again behold her orphan boy,
With eager eyes run o'er his pallid face,
The marks of added anguish there to trace;
Those God had joined, and man has rent in twain,
A few brief hours at length may meet again,
Converse awhile on joys for ever flown—
Or that blest world where parting is unknown.

Not so ! E'en here oppression lifts her rod
Against the laws of nature, and of God !
With heartless tyranny, that loves to shake
The bruised reed, to show its power to break,—
A lofty wall of separation rose,
With needless cruelty, to sever those
Who, at God's holy Altar, vowed to be
Each other's helpmates in adversity !

What though bereft of all external aid,
These sons and daughters of affliction prayed ;
No white-robed choristers their liquid lays
Mixed with the pealing organ's notes of praise,¹¹
Yet He who listens to the lowly prayer,
Vouchsafed to grant His gracious presence there :
Eternal truth, as by our Church expressed,
Speaks peace and pardon to the contrite breast
“In mind—in body—or estate distressed” ;—
Yet now and then, as some responsive word,
By the quick ear of fond affection heard,

In that remembered voice whose gentle tone
So oft in prayer had blended with his own,
Call'd back his thoughts to days for ever past,
A mournful glance, *John Ashford* upward cast ;
And his pale cheek more deadly pale became,
As to the severing wall he turned his feeble frame.

When like a parched scroll the Heavens retire,¹²
The deep sea roll, a sulph'rous lake of fire ;
When into blood the silver moon shall turn,
And earth dissolving, as a furnace burn,
The bright sun blacken like a fun'ral pall,
And from the shrivelled sky the pale stars fall
As her untimely fruit the fig-tree casts,
When shaken with the whirlwind's mighty blasts,
While far above the crash of worlds around,
Is heard the Angel-Trumpet's thrilling sound ;
Then, starting from their nameless graves, shall rise
The poor, whom now, men torture, crush, despise,—¹³

And the Eternal Master shall at last
Roll back the curtain that conceals the past,
Lay bare the callous heart to every eye,
Recount each silent tear, each unmarked sigh
Wrung from the wretched by the hand of power;—
Who may abide the terrors of that hour?
Who, that has helped to swell the awful sum,
When the dread day of retribution come?

The prayers were ended, and the holy man
His words of peace and mercy then began,
No tropes, no figures graced his simple speech,
His only care, a Saviour's love to preach.
Not his to minister "in pride of place,"
Where marble columns rise with classic grace,
And thronging chariots at the portals wait,
While kneeling nobles worship God in state;
Where heavenly truth by graceful lips imprest,
Stirs the calm surface of the star-girt breast,

And the heart's chords like tuneful harp-strings play
'Till with the pleasant voice the excitement dies away.

Pleased to proclaim glad tidings to the poor ;
"The Pauper's Chaplain ;" and he sought no more :
What once was gain to him he counted loss,
Content to nail his glory to the Cross.

—While at the tables of the rich and great,
His wealthier brethren took their frequent seat,
Beside the bed of abject poverty,
Where age and want had found a place to die,
He might be seen, still prompt at every call,
"He watch'd and wept, he pray'd and felt for all,"
Lab'ring with holy jealousy as one
Who must account, whene'er his work was done,
For all the souls committed to his care ;—
If any, in the darkness of despair
'Died and made no sign' ere they expired,
"What if their blood at my hands be required ?"
He'd trembling ask, then with redoubled zeal
Press on, and pray that God would set His seal

Upon his humble ministry and bless
His poor afflicted flock, in righteousness,
That they might be his future joy and crown,
Where his unclouded sun shall never more go down.

When pain and poverty, all-dreaded pair,
Sought the low hut and fixed their dwelling there,
Unnerved the father's arm, and day by day
Swept all his little savings fast away,
Till nought was left him of the frugal past,
Save the scant means to bury him at last—
The only payment, which his "Club" supplied
Whene'er a long afflicted member died :—
He fearless entered the infectious room,
Intent to guide the trembling spirit home—
To bind with tend'rest care the broken heart,
And bid the contrite soul in peace depart.
—Though, shrinking from the pestilential air,
The kindest neighbours feared to venture there,
Yet when that wretched hut at distance passed,
They, worn and weary, gained their home at last,—

When the fond Father kissed his infant boy,
With all a parent's apprehensive joy—
How fervent rose to Heaven the evening prayer;
That God would please their happy home to spare,
Bid the destroying Angel stay his hand,
Nor let him desolate a guilty land.
Oft starting from their troubled dreams they woke,
For fears of coming ill their slumbers broke,
And as they watched that sick room's lonely light,
All dimly burning through the tedious night,
And thought of the poor sufferers sinking there,
Again for them would rise the frequent prayer.
—Like Judah's sin-stained leper, cast of old,
An unclean thing from out the chosen fold;
Shunned in their lonely anguish e'en by those
Who had so often kindly shared their woes:—
On the damp floor was placed their straw-strewn bed,
Beside the living lay the noisome dead,
All in one crowded room;—though the chill air
Swept through the thatch and laid the rafters bare,

The dews of death fell like the summer rain,
And hung in drops upon the broken pane,
Tainting the air with that faint sickly smell
In which the pestilence delights to dwell;
Black stagnant water oozed the walls between,
“Whilst from compelled neglect, and all unclean,”
In their diseased limbs, foul vermin bred,
And on their fretted sores still unmolested fed.
Yet there, with love oh ! stronger far than death,
The mother watched her children’s failing breath
Night after night, till she exhausted lay
All but as helpless and as weak as they;
As the fierce death-pangs racked each writhing frame,
She prayed for their release—and when it came,
Mixed with low moanings, mournful thanks she gave,
As their pain-wasted limbs she straighten’d for the grave
—There, too, was heard amidst the silent night,
The feeble cry of terror and affright,
When in the restlessness of mortal pain,
Which turns and turns, and seeks for ease in vain ;

The fever-spotted arm was wildly thrown
Round the cold form, decaying by their own :
Yet there the minister of God was seen,
Like Israel's High Priest, who stood between
The living and the dead ;—he, bending o'er
That wretched couch, would words of comfort pour
Into the dying ear ; the sufferer heard,
And doubt and fear fled at God's holy Word,
For ever fled,—Faith o'er the future cast
Her peaceful smile unclouded to the last !

He broke the sacred bread and poured the wine,
Of peace and pardon, Heaven's accepted sign ;
And then, whilst life and consciousness remained,
With holy texts the sinking soul sustained ;
Oh ! when did God's eternal promise fail
To light the darkness of death's gloomy vale ?
—“Only believe,—fear not, nor be dismayed,
Thy God is with thee, be not thou afraid ;
He who hath led thee all thy journey through,
Will never leave thee nor forsake thee now,—

For He is not a man that He should lie,
Nor son of man to pass His promise by;
Then lift, in faith and hope, thy death-dimmed eyes
Up to those many mansions in the skies,
And there, with Kings and Prophets, thou shalt see
A place prepared by love Divine for thee;
For hath He said, and will He do it not?
Or hath He spoken, and His word forgot?
'I will be with thee when thou passest through
The waters, they shall not thy soul o'erflow,
Nor walking through the fire shalt thou be burned;
Nor shall the kindling flame be on thee turned.'
—Oh, death where is thy sting? Thanks be to God
Who giveth us the victory, through His blood
Who bowed His sacred head upon the tree,
To make this fearful passage safe to thee."
—As each reviving promise cheered his heart,
The dying whispered—"let me now depart—
'Mine eyes have seen Thy great salvation Lord,
'And my soul rests on Thine all-faithful word."

'Tis over now :—before th' Eternal throne,
Earth's poor despised one casts his blood-bought crown,
And from his mansion in that world of bliss,
Looks down on all his wanderings through this ;
Sees how, by tears and trials, doubts and fears,
Increasing still with still increasing years,
His God has led him by the one right way,
Safe to the realms of everlasting day.

THE VILLAGE PAUPERS.

PART II.

THE DEATH-BED.

“Oh! change—Oh! wondrous change—
Burst are the prison bars—
This moment ~~there~~, so low,
So agonized, and now
Beyond the stars!”

The wintry blasts had to their caverns fled,
The first pale snowdrop hung its trembling head ;
Lifting the sear'd leaves in the wind-strewn wood,
The hardy primrose half-expanded stood,
And violet buds with yet unopened blue,
Gave gladsome promise to the wanderer's view :—
Reviving sickness from her couch of pain,
Trode with firm step the verdant earth again,

With grateful heart, paced the low shelter'd vale,
And joy and health drank with each passing gale.
Not so the inmates by yon walls confined,
With yearnings vain they feel the vernal wind,
Laden with sweets from every hawthorn bough,
Through the small lattice fan their fever'd brow ;
Pent in the sick ward's soul-depressing room,
Where scarce a straggling sunbeam dares to come,
The victims of disease day after day,
Amid their hopeless anguish, ling'ring lay,
Till those employed their nightly couch to tend,
Oft wonder'd when the irksome task would end,
And still, as early morning slowly broke,
With wishes vain, beheld th' expected stroke
Again delayed :—saw the poor wretches lie,
The pain-pinch'd features—the dim filmy eye,
And heard their waking moan of lengthen'd agony.
Untaught of heaven, sin's heavy load to bear,
Their cries, scarce heeded, filled the troubled air,

For peevish complaints for acts of kindness shown,
Had made the law of kindness, little known.
—Strong contrast to the mingled murmurs there,
Was heard the feeble voice of praise and prayer ;
Propp'd on his pillow'd chair, with failing breath,
And looks that told of fast approaching death,
John Ashford sat, the open window nigh,
Where he could see once more the bright blue sky :—
Borne on the balmy breeze there gently floats
The wand'ring cuckoo's spring-returning notes ;
Tho' like a distant echo scarcely heard,
Came the faint music of the far-off bird,
He listened, till the joys that once he knew,
Again returning met his welcome view,
For 'mid that scene of weariness and pain,
It brought remembrance of his home again,—
The reed-thatch'd cottage, once his joy and pride,
Where all his earthly prospects bloomed and died ;
Oh ! sure the tear that mingled with his prayer,
Left not a stain of guilty sorrow there :—

The cuckoo-clock, again he heard, and saw
His happy children bending o'er God's law,
Well pleased to turn its pictur'd treasures o'er ;
Adam and Eve—the Ark of faithful Noah,—
Elijah's fiery car—the Lion's den—
The Saviour in the hands of sinful men ;
Whilst hopes and fears alternately prevail,
As mute they listen to the Sunday tale ;
All, all were present then, as fresh and fair,
As in life's cloudless manhood once they were.
The Church, along whose path with cowslips gay,
He once was wont with joyous step to stray,
Where he to God in infancy was given,
And where his plighted troth was heard in heaven ;
Where oft he knelt in faith when sore distress'd,
And sought and found the Saviour's promised rest ;
He treads again the consecrated ground,
And bends once more above the grassy mound,
Where rests his child in his long quiet home,
So kindly shelter'd from the ills to come :

How young he died, how duteous and how good,
He reads again upon the painted wood,
Which in the place of sculptured stone declares
His patient hope, whose humble name it bears ;
’Twas all a father’s toiling love could rear
In memory of the child he held so dear.

Shut from the vital air, day after day
He weaker grew, and sunk by slow decay :—
’Twas not that struggle with his Maker’s will,
When man perforce submits but murmurs still,
And will not listen to the chast’ning rod,
But frets and strives against the hand of God,
Till vain repinings barbing every dart,
End in that madness, called a broken heart !
’Twas not disease ; the Leech’s skill was tried,
And kindly too, with every aid beside ;
They gave him costly food and generous wine,
When they perceived his health and strength decline,

But all too late they came, desire had fled ;
Like votive offerings placed before the dead,
Untouched they stood, whilst many a hungry eye,
Glared on the viands that lay tempting by.

When death's cold dews have dimmed the outward sight
How oft at eventide has there been light—
How often, through the parting clouds is given,
The martyr's faith to see the opening Heaven.¹⁴
Thus, as his final home *John Ashford* neared,
Brighter and brighter still his hopes appeared,
"The soul's dark cottage battered and decayed,
Let in new light through chinks that time had made."
Upon his knees there lay the book of prayer,
And as his dim eyes feebly rested there,
They kindled oft with Heaven's ethereal light,
As some reviving promise met his sight ;—
—"There is laid up for me against that day,
A glorious crown that fadeth not away."

“Though worms destroy this body ’neath the sod,
Yet in my flesh shall I behold my God!”

—Like the caged bird that ever restless, tries
To force a passage to the distant skies,
He yearn’d to drop the soul-encumb’ring clay,
And to his Saviour’s arms, wing his unfetter’d way.
Long after every hope of life was gone,
Week after week the sufferer lingered on,
Till at the midnight hour the change drew nigh,
And, kindly called to see their father die,
The weeping children, by their mother led,
Stood in mute anguish round his lowly bed.
The rattling throat and short convulsive breath,
Announced the quicken’d step of coming death,
Yet, as the quiv’ring taper’s sinking light,
Will sometimes brighten ere extinguished quite,
His feeble frame was strengthen’d at the last ;
An anxious glance he round the chamber cast,
As, to be sure that all he loved were there,
Then clasped his hands in attitude of prayer,

And those who heard him, wondered at the power,
So largely given in life's departing hour.
"I die, but God will surely be with you,
And guide you all your lonely journey through.
When I look back upon the lengthen'd way
My God has led me, I can truly say
That the whole path throughout was thickly strewn
With mercies, oft to my weak sense unknown;
Oh! in this solemn hour, how light appears
That woe which cost so many bitter tears;
I bless thee Lord, e'en for the thorny road,
My worn and weary feet so long have trod,
For it has brought me closer to my God.
I bless thee for the joys my youth has known,—
For the dark clouds around my evening thrown,
Mysterious still,—hard to be understood,
Yet they have worked together for my good,
Humbling the source of all my earthly pride,
That for my wants, I could myself provide,
Nor simply trust in Him the crucified."

I bless thee for my dear kind faithful wife,
Who more than shared the sorrows of my life ;
That she again my couch of pain can tend,
And with her presence cheer me to the end.
I charge thee, *Ann*, by thy untiring love,
By all thy hopes of mercy from above,
By all the tears we have together shed,
By all thy fond remembrance of the dead,
When struggling lone in widowhood and pain,
Train our dear children that we meet again.
—Lord, I commend these little ones to Thee,
For Thou hast said, ‘I will their Father be,
And let thy widows put their trust in me.’
In Thee the fatherless find mercy, Lord
Be it to them according to Thy word.—
Then, one by one he tenderly carest,
And to his dying lips their pale cheeks prest,
But from that icy kiss in sore dismay,
The youngest struggled hard to get away ;

Absence, and pain, and coming death had changed
His once familiar features, and estranged
The fond affections of his darling child,
Whose artless smiles so often had beguiled
The weary hours of pain and poverty,
With all the winning ways of infancy.

—Faint and exhausted for a time he lay,
As tho' the flutt'ring soul had passed away ;
Save that his white lips moved, as words of prayer
Rose from his heart, and died unutter'd there.
Slowly his eyes unclosed, and then again,
Religion triumphed over mortal pain ;
“I bless thee Lord, that in this parting hour,
Thou hast not left me to the Tempter's power,
That I still feel Thy gracious presence near,
Dispelling every doubt and anxious fear,
Filling my soul with inward joy and peace ;
Soon shall I enter, where the wicked cease
From troubling, and the weary are at rest,
Soft pillowed on my gracious Saviour's breast.”

—Angels, that watched his failing breath the while,
Cast on each other an approving smile,
And as the awe-struck paupers gathered round,
They felt indeed that this was holy ground :—
A prayerless wish from many a time-sear'd heart,
Was heard in Heaven ;—"Oh ! let me so depart
"Peaceful and calm, with hopes all fixed on high ;
"Lord, let me like thy righteous servant die."
As he describ'd the harden'd sinner's doom,
And warned them of the fearful wrath to come,
Visions of evil deeds forgotten long,
Came crowding round, a dark and spectral throng ;
But, like the rock-sown corn, which springs and dies,
Beneath the scorching beams of eastern skies,
Their good resolves rose only to decay,
As melts the early cloud and dew away,
Before the brightness of the risen day ;
Yet oft 'midst nights of weariness and pain,
Shall that sepulchral voice return again.

His wife supported still his throbbing head,
And, though her tears fell fast upon the bed,
Stifled her sobs, one child had clasp'd her arm,
And closer clung in infantine alarm,
Another, 'neath her shelt'ring apron crept,
And wept, because her own dear mother wept :
"Jesus come quick :—" at the half-uttered word
His pale lips closed—his soul was with the Lord !

Oh ! the blest moment when the poor man dies,
Quits his vile couch, for yonder star-paved skies,
His earthly hovel, where disease and pain,
And poverty with ever galling chain,
Distress'd his patient spirit day by day,
Till, worn and weary he was fain to pray
For the dove's wings that he might flee away,
And be at rest,—now he has reached his home
Where sin, and pain, and want can never come.

Silent they stood around that lowly bed,
To take a last look of the newly dead.

Though fast the tears of infancy and age,
Dry on the fading leaves of memory's page,
Oh ! never from the young and shudd'ring heart,
Will that first impress of a corpse depart,
Remember'd through their lonely orphan lot,
When all his living love shall be forgot.
The wayward action that had once perplex'd,
The unkind word his gentle spirit vex'd,
Like' spectres from the long-forgotten past,
Rose from that bed upbraidingly at last :
Regardless trifles then—now strangely grown
Like shadows by the dying daylight thrown.
The placid marble features, still retained
The blest assurance, that, the victory gained,
The parted soul had entered into rest,
To be no more by poverty distress'd.
Those sightless eyes which waked so oft to weep,
Were sweetly sealed in deep untroubled sleep ;
The toil-worn hands so often clasped in prayer
For rest, all still and motionless lay there ;

The once faint flutt'ring heart and aching head,
Reposed at length upon their dreamless bed ;
Oh ! selfish sorrow that would wake him now,
Again to gem with agony his brow.

Before they to their separate wards repair,
The children each would say their evening prayer ;
The eldest, knelt at his dear mother's knee,
As in the days of early infancy,
Or ere that poverty's all crushing stroke,
The bonds of fond affection rudely broke.
With clasped hands and meekly bended head,
The prayer the Saviour taught, was duly said,
Then came the added words, that God would bless
His brothers dear amid their friendlessness,
And though some parting tears perforce would fall,
With kind remembrance still he named them all ;
"Bless my dear mother and—:" the heaving breast,
And quick convulsive sob revealed the rest ;—

His thoughts were wand'ring to his home away,
Where for his *father* he was wont to pray ;—
He needed not their prayers ;—high notes of praise,
His happy spirit had begun to raise,
And list'ning seraphs in mute wonder hung
On the sweet strains the ransom'd stranger sung.

Thou Father of the fatherless, look down
In pity from thy angel-girded throne,
Comfort the widow—be the orphan's stay,
And wipe their tears of deep distress away !

For his scarce confined clay, a grave they made,
Where all the poor and destitute are laid ;
The shorten'd service o'er that grave was read,¹⁵
For the poor outcasts must not bring their dead
Within the Church they loved, nor offer there
With sorrow-soften'd hearts, grief's latest prayer,
The hand of God had touched them, and its door,
Man closed against them,—they were very poor ;—

Yes ! as they passed it in their hour of need,
Forlorn and wretched ;—they felt poor indeed.
Oh ! ye who love with pious zeal to tend
The hallowed spot where rests the buried friend,
Who plant affection's flowers, and cast away
The slightest weed that springs above their clay—
Or guard with costly care the precious trust
“ With storied urn or animated bust ;”
Give to the poor amidst their unsoothed woes,
The consolation which our Church bestows,
Within her portals let them bear their dead,
And reverently *there* the parting prayers be said.

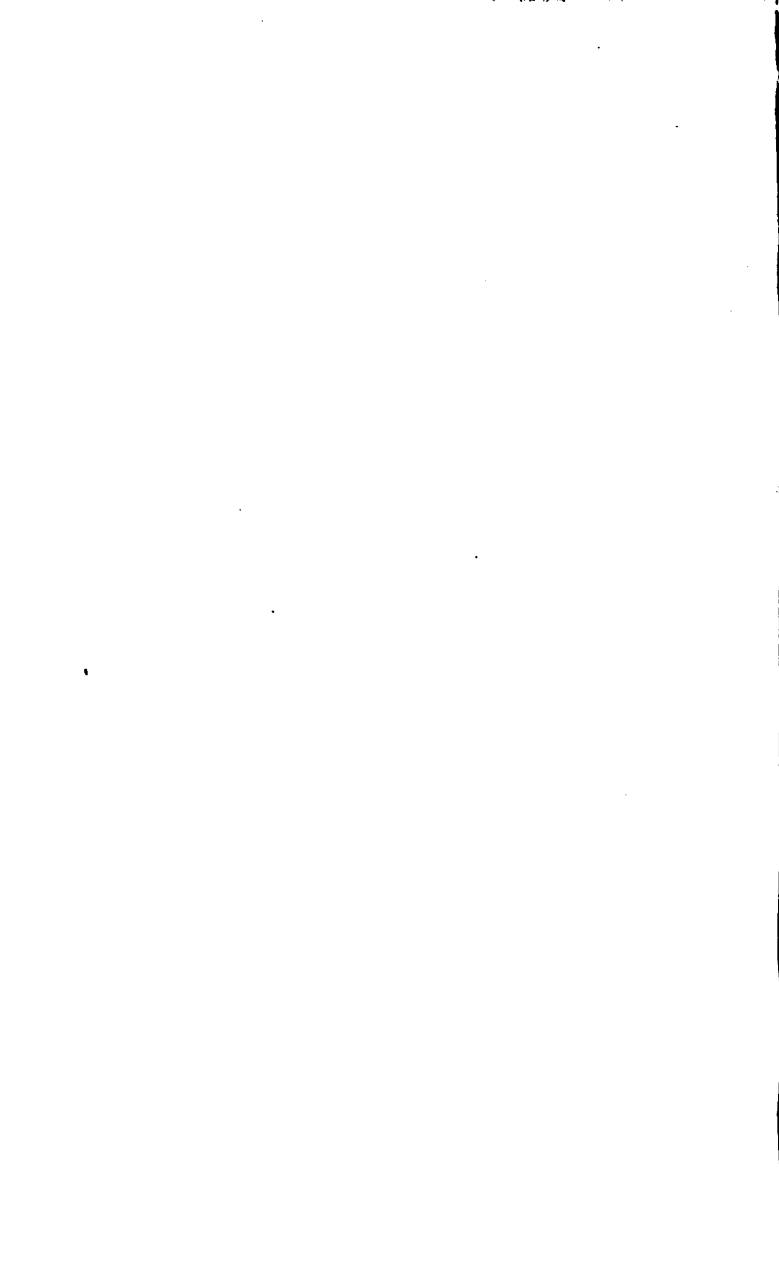
Like troubled springs, by angel-influence stirred
Amidst their sorrows, healing words were heard :—
“ Almighty God we render thanks to Thee,
That Thou hast set our suffering brother free
From this low world of sin and misery.
The just with Thee in perfect joy are found,
And we commit his body to the ground

In sure and certain hope, again to rise
And meet his Lord and Saviour in the skies.
—I heard a voice,” (oh ! at the grave how dear,
When bending over all that loved us here,)
“Say, write from henceforth, blessed are the dead,
Who in the Lord lay down their weary head,
And from their labours rest.”

—No bended brier guards the lowly mound,
Of those interr'd in that neglected ground ;
They lie in rows beside the churchyard wall,
Where the refreshing sunbeams never fall,
But constant drippings from th' o'erhanging eaves,
Each pitying friend and passing traveller grieves ;
Nor can the crowded burial place give room
For all the stranger-dead that thither come.
“Ere the moist flesh has mingled with the earth,”
The frequent spade with reckless haste casts forth,
Before the shuddering rustic's sick'ning view,
The mangled relics of the friends he knew,

Whilst revelling in the rotting masses round,
Huge clust'ring worms are ever clinging found.
Patches of slimy verdure darkly creep,
Round the coarse gravel where the paupers sleep ;
The churchyard daisy never blossoms there,
But all is sad and desolate and bare,
Save the rank nettles waving o'er the bed
Where ASHFORD rests among the nameless dead !

NOTES.



NOTES TO THE VILLAGE PAUPERS.

Page 5, note 1.

And one, the loved of all, again she hears,—

“He was the loved of all, but none

O'er his lone grave may weep.”—*Mrs. Hemans.*

Page 6, note 2.

For these no more must tread the green hill's side,—

In June 1844, a very humane resolution, to permit the aged inmates of the Colchester Union House to leave the House for air and exercise and to visit their friends, was carried by a large majority of the Guardians, but the Poor Law Commissioners exercised their veto against it as being contrary to the “general orders.”

Page 18, note 3.

Few could a straighter cleaner furrow draw,

And as an umpire, Ashford's word was law.

“He once was chief of all the rustic trade,

His steady hand the straightest furrow made.”

CRABBE.

Page 25, note 4.

Is it a christian duty thus to make

The Pauper's home repulsive, till it shake

The strongest nerve and break the bleeding heart.

“The Workhouse should be a place of *hardship*, of coarse fare, of degradation and humility, it should be administered with strictness and *with severity*. It should be as *repulsive* as is consistent with humanity !”

Extract of a letter appended to a report from the Secretary of the Poor Law Commission.—*Perils of the Nation*, page 199.

Page 40, note 5.

The tott'ring Grandsire first prepared to go,—

“The good old Sire, the first prepared to go

To new-found worlds and wept for others woe.”—

Goldsmith.

Page 50, note 6.

Could he like Israel's weeping Prophet see.

Through the dim future, all he'll one day be.

“And Elisha said unto him, go, say unto him, thou mayest certainly recover: howbeit the Lord hath shewed me that he shall surely die. And he settled his countenance stedfastly, until he was ashamed; and the man of

God wept. And Hazael said, why weepeth my lord? and he answered, because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel; their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child. And Hazael said, but what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, The Lord hath shewed me that thou *shalt* be king over Syria.”—II KINGS, c. VIII, v. 10 to 13.

Page 54, note 7.

*Then turn'd repining to those half-till'd lands,
Which wanted but the labour of their hands,
To fill the barns with harvest's grateful store,
And bring contentment to the poor man's door.*

*(Extracts from “Able-bodied Pauperism; explained, as to its Cause and relief, in a letter to a relative abroad, by a Rural Rector.” **

“In the best cultivated districts the land is not yet half cultivated; and this the ‘surplus labourers’ can easily perceive. They can compare the large farms carried on with insufficient capital, with some small field of one acre

* London, Longman & Co.

or less, which by rare good fortune and yet almost in every locality, a poor man has got into his own sole occupation. They see the field become a fertile farm in miniature, and the man and his children raised out of the gulph of their own hopeless destitution. And while this is the case, it is useless for us to recommend emigration ; as useless as it has become for us to preach industry to the able-bodied pauper, and to stir up his willingness to work.

“ Our definition of poverty is imperfect and erroneous ; we ignore *poverty of employment*, and we are daily driving thousands of such paupers into the other form of poverty which we do recognize, viz,—the poverty of sickness and impotency. It is therefore considered by the poor a blessing to fall sick, and all the early symptoms of sickness are hailed gladly and are encouraged, because the plea of bodily ability is over and the Boards of Guardians eagerly seize upon a sick certificate as affording an opportunity of allowing *out-door relief*. We residents in the country see this interchange of the two descriptions of Poverty constantly going on ; and as the mind sinks it weighs down the body, and the trifling disorder has no energy of the animal spirits to prevent its progress towards disease.”

In the opinion of the able author of the Pamphlet from which these extracts are taken, the remedy for all these fast increasing evils is to be found in the following mode of employment for the able-bodied Paupers—

“ In all our Unions we may have well located farms, as many as the population of the Union may require. These Union farms may be entirely for spade or fork husbandry, under skilful superintendence of officers of the Union ; and these officers may be overlooked by an agricultural committee for each farm district of the Union. Here would the capital of the rate-payers, now utterly wasted, be profitably employed ; and the rates of the smallest rate-payer, which were insufficient by themselves to enable him to employ another labourer, being thus gathered up in a joint stock capital with other rates and skilfully combined with labour, would now become investments for future diminution of rates. All the establishment charges, which now form so large a per-centage of the rates, might be defrayed—the profits of labour would pay the expenses of the Union House and all its tributary farms. The terrorism of in-door maintenance being removed, the Union House would become the proper asylum

for the impotent and friendless poor, and used only as the head office for controlling the employment of the able-bodied."

The experiment was last year tried upon a small scale at Horsham in Sussex, when 338 adult paupers and 905 children belonging to the Union, were profitably employed in agricultural labour at liberal wages, all of whom would otherwise have been a heavy burden upon the parish rates. The whole Pamphlet will well repay an attentive perusal.

Page 61, note 8.

As loud he read the prayer for all that are oppressed.

"That it may please thee to defend and provide for the fatherless children, and widows, and all that are desolate and oppressed."—*Church Service.*

Page 63, note 9.

The broken-hearted wife in anguish pined.

"The Guardians for the Sudbury Union, with that humane consideration for the comfort of the poor which has invariably marked their administration of the law, have removed the partition which separated the male and female paupers during Divine Service in the chapel of the Union

House, where the husband and father is now permitted to worship God in the presence of his wife and children. In addition to this thoughtful kindness, the aged poor are allowed to attend the parish Church once every Sunday. This Union, which consists of forty-four parishes, was one of the very last, in which 'out-door relief' to the deserving able-bodied poor was discontinued."

Page 66, note 10.

*Tears such as fell from Israel's aged eyes,
When they beheld the second Temple rise.*

"But many of the Priests and Levites, and chief of the Fathers, who were ancient men that had seen the first House, when the foundation of this House was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice."—*Ezra*, c. iii, v. 12.

Page 67, note 11.

Mixed with the pealing organ's notes of Praise.

"Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault,
The Pealing Anthem swells the notes of Praise."—*Gray*.

Page 68, note 12.

When like a parched scroll the Heavens retire.

"The sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto

or at least somewhat diminished in their intensity.”—
“*Address to Landlords, on the Advantages of Spade
Tenantry among Labouring Classes, by the Rev. J. S.
Henslow, M. A.*”

Page 82, note 14.

The Martyr's faith to see the opening Heaven.

“Behold, I see the Heavens opened, and the Son of
Man standing at the right hand of God.”—*Acts*, c. vii,
v. 56.

Page 91, note 15.

*The shorten'd service o'er that grave was read,
For the poor outcasts must not bring their dead
Within the Church they loved, nor offer there
With sorrow-soften'd hearts, grief's latest prayer.*

In very many parishes the reprehensible custom pre-
vails of charging a higher sum if the corpse is taken *into*
the Church and the *whole* of our beautiful burial service
read. The effect of this unwise regulation necessarily
excludes the *very* poor from a portion of that consolation
which our Church has so considerably provided, at a time
when the bereaved mourners have need of all the comfort

which religion can bestow. In addition to this, the practice continues the degradation of poverty even after life is extinct. Heavy as the burial fees press upon the labouring poor, when their little means have been almost exhausted by the expenses attending a lingering illness, we have known them make many painful sacrifices, and exercise the most rigid self-denial, in order to raise a sum sufficient to defray the expense of having the remains of their departed friends, a son, a brother, a husband, or a father, "carried into the Church," it being as they artlessly express it, "the last respect they can pay them."

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.



MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

THE DYING CHILD.

“ What should it know of Death ? ”

“ Come closer, closer, dear Mamma,
My heart is filled with fears,
My eyes are dark,—I hear your sobs,
But cannot see your tears.

I feel your warm breath on my lips,
That are so icy cold ;
Come closer, closer, dear Mamma,
Give me your hand to hold.

I quite forget my little hymn,
 “ How doth the busy bee,”
Which every day, I used to say,
 When sitting on your knee :—

Nor can I recollect my prayers ;
 And dear Mamma you know
That the great God will angry be
 If I forget *them* too.

And dear Papa, when he comes home,
 Oh will he not be vex't ?
“ Give us this day our daily bread : ”
 What is it that comes next ?—

“ Thine is the kingdom and the power ? ”
 I cannot think of more ;
It comes and goes away so quick,
 It never did before. ”

“ Hush darling ! you are going to
The bright and blessed sky,
Where all God’s holy Children go,
To live with him on high ”

“ But will he love me, dear Mamma,
As tenderly as you,
And will my own Papa, one day,
Come and live with me too ?

But you must first, lay me to sleep,
Where Grand-papa is laid ;
Is not the Churchyard cold and dark,
And sha’nt I feel afraid ?

And will you every evening come,
And say my pretty prayer,
Over poor Lucy’s little grave,
And see that no one’s there ?

And promise me that when you die,
That they your grave shall make,
The next to mine, that I may be,
Close to you when I wake.

Nay, do not leave me dear Mamma,
Your watch beside me keep,
My heart feels cold—the room's all dark,
Now lay me down to sleep :—

And should I sleep to wake no more,
Dear—dear Mamma, good-bye :
Poor Nurse is kind, but oh do *you*
Be with me when I die ! ”

THE CONVICT'S RETURN.

CANTO I.

"Led step by step to guilt,
He was an exile from his native home,
Many a long year."

SCENE—*The Ocean.* A ship approaching the shore.

TIME—*Day-break.*

"Night wanes !" and feebly on the distant height,
The glimmering watchfire, sheds its lonely light ;
With morn's return, again the fresh'ning breeze
Fills the light sails, and wakes the slumb'ring seas,
And swiftly thro' the pearly billows now,
Yon homeward vessel darts her gallant prow.
—Oh ! none but those who painful vigils keep,
With hearts as restless as the troubled deep
O'er which they watch the boundless billows roll,
'Till hope deferred weighs down the sick'ning soul,

Can paint the joy, when from the giddy mast,
The thrilling sound of "*Land*" is heard at last ;
At once it wakens Memory's sweetest chord,
And the heart leaps, exulting at the word.
—Home's holy joys in bright perspective rise,
As towards the shore that swift wing'd vessel flies :
Thronged on her busy deck with sweet delight,
The joyous sailors strain their aching sight,
Where parting tokens wave in beauty's hand,
And trusting love stands beck'ning to the strand.
—The anchor falls—they ply the dashing oar,
And hand grasps hand in transport on the shore.

Shunning with anxious care each curious gaze,
Along the laughing beach a stranger strays ;
No voice of kindness—no extended hand,
Welcomes that lone one to his native land.
His step is feeble, yet his form appears
•
More worn with grief and sickness, than with years,

Untamed by time, upon his swarthy face,
Have noble passions left their ruin trace ;
The soul to dare, the high, the lofty mien,
The faithless pledge of all he might have been.
What is he now ? The erring child of crime ;
A stranger in his own—his native clime ;
Without a hope, except to die at last,
Where his brief years of happiness were past,
To rest where *Ellen* rests, whose changeless love,
Guilt could not stain, nor infamy remove.
—His is the seared heart's utter loneliness,
“None left to bless him, none whom he can bless ;”
Yet onward still, instinctively he strays,
Where stood his peaceful home in brighter days.
—He gains the hill, and o'er his guilty soul,
Departed joys in sad remembrance roll :
The sunny bower his lost love used to share—
The sweet-briar roses she had planted there—
The grassy turf his childish feet had pressed—
The woodbine curling round the swallow's nest—

The ivy tower that reared its head so high—
All, verdant smiled, and met his deep sunk eye,
As in his guileless hours of infancy.

—To those who need them most, are tears denied,
And his, despair had quenched since *Ellen* died,
But when he gazed upon that sacred scene,
Where once she dwelt—where once he'd happy been ;
Feelings awoke that long in darkness slept,
And the poor Exile, like an infant wept.

A matron's step moves slowly o'er the vale.
—Why is his look so wild—his cheek so pale
At her approach ?

 All speechless and amazed,
Upon the stranger's sickly form she gazed ;
That form which guilt had blighted in its prime,
And left, a living monument of crime ;
Nor long she gazed, ere Nature's accents wild,
Broke from her lips, "'tis he—it is my child."

CANTO II.

"To her he came to die, and every day
She took some portion of the dread away :
With him she prayed, to him his Bible read,
Soothed the faint heart, and held the aching head."

Years cannot change—nor worthlessness remove—
Nor guilt impair, a mother's holy love ;
It twines around the most ungrateful heart,
Tho' thankless all, it will not thence depart.
—She watched beside his bed, as every day
He weaker grew and sunk by slow decay :
There would she kneel, and with submissive prayer,
Implore of heaven her dying child to spare ;
Or if not so, resigned he might sustain
The fearful agonies of mortal pain.
And she would sit, and o'er his troubled sleep,
Night after night unwearied vigils keep ;

Still as he waked, his dim eye wandered round,
All restless 'till his mother's form he found,
Then sink in brief forgetfulness again,
The only refuge, sickness knows from pain.

Tho' pitying friends oft wished the toil to share,
And kindly proffered to supply her care ;
"No," she would grateful say, "It would be wrong
"To leave him now, I shall not have him long."
Yet there were times, when hope's delusive ray,
Through sorrow's thickest cloud would force its way,
Flush the pale cheek, and faithless promise give,
That pitying Heaven had bid the sufferer live.
Then would she lead him to their sunny bower,
And from the rose-tree bring his favourite flower,
And speak of better days—of ills gone by,
'Till Memory's tear-drop filled his dying eye ;
This would she mark, with all a mother's care,
Change the soft theme, and point how heavenly fair
The sun's last radiance stained the western sky ;
Or bid him list the woodlark's melody.

In those brief moments, he almost forgot
"The guilt, the shame, the anguish of his lot ;"
And felt, while clasped her withered hand in his,
More than high fancy forms of earthly bliss.
And thus he lingered on, 'midst hopes and fears,
That waken'd oft a mother's smiles and tears,
'Till in her arms he died.

The letter'd stone,
Which marks his rest, still makes his errors known ;
It was his last request, that there might be,
That record of the righteous infamy
Which waits on evil deeds ;—to warn and save
Youth, in its wild career, from guilt's untimely grave.

THE SUICIDE.

"One more unfortunate weary of breath,
 Rashly importunate gone to her death,
 Take her up tenderly, lift her with care,
 Fashion'd so slenderly, young and so fair."

Struggling with desp'rate plunge to reach
 The sea-weed floating on the beach,
 "In helpless, hopeless agony,"
 Arose Lucinda's drowning cry ;
 Her last long shriek of wild despair
 Fell on her base betrayer's ear ;
 But soon the fearful strife was o'er,
 And list'ning silence heard no more.

* * * * *

He, for whose love her life she gave,
 Has borne her from the whelming wave ;
 And, o'er the wreck his guilt has wrought,
 Bends, struggling with the fearful thought,

That her lost spirit feels the fire
Which never—never, must expire.
—Oh ! if there be a pang on earth
Surpassing all of mortal birth,
Which shudd'ring fiends might shrink to share,
It is the wounded soul's despair,
Who sees, amidst life's blessings lost,
That being, once beloved the most,
Perforce to guilt and ruin driven,
Self-exiled from her native heaven ;
And hears an angry God demand
Her blood in vengeance at *his* hand.

Yes ! her's was trusting woman's lot,
Beloved—betrayed—forsook—forgot ;
What boots it, step by step, to trace
Corroding sorrow's stealthy pace ;
Who has not seen it day by day,
Wearing its victim's life away ?

—Without a joy that earth could give
To win the broken heart to live ;
Without a ray of heavenly light,
To gild affliction's darksome night ;
Deep in her breast she hid the wrong,
And bore her load of suff'ring long,
'Till reason left her sainted throne,
And passion's impulse ruled alone.

—What, though the earth be coldly blest,
In which her beauteous form shall rest ;
What, though no spirit-soothing prayer
By white-robed priest be offered there ;—
Though superstition fear to tread
Above guilt's solitary bed ;
Yet there shall ONE lone mourner weep,
And many a painful vigil keep,
While madd'ning memory shall raise
The form he loved in better days,
And Fancy, in the night-wind's strain,
Repeat her dying shriek again.

AND HAST THOU WEPT.

And hast thou wept beside the bed
Where love's last hopes were lying ;
Pillow'd thy angel's languid head,
And watch'd her slowly dying ?

And hast thou felt the shuddering chill
Of the icy lips of Death,
As doubtful if life linger'd still,
Thou knelt to catch her breath ?

And has thy wounded spirit known
That throb of anguish drear,
Felt, when the rattling dust is thrown
O'er all that lov'd us here ?

Poor wand'rer,—on life's stormy sea,
Thy hopes and fears are o'er,
Nor tears, nor smiles, remain for thee,
The *scar'd* heart feels no more.

THE SHIPWRECK.

The signal lights were seen no more
Through mist and spray to gleam on high ;
No more along the rocky shore
Was heard the drowning seaman's cry.

Oh ! many a light and joyous sail
Shall float across their unknown grave,
Where wreath'd with shells and sea-flowers pale,
They sleep beneath the guilty wave.

For them will rise the fruitless prayer,
What time the storm-cloud dims the sky,
And tempests sweep the troubled air ;—
But oh ! "how still their hearts will lie."

And oft on yonder rugged cliff,
Will patient hope her vigils keep,
And fondly deem their little skiff,
Still lingers on the tranquil deep.

THE WIDOW.

“Upon his brow

• The damps of death are settling—and his eyes
Grow fixed and meaningless, she marks the change
With desperate earnestness; and staying even
Her breath, that nothing may disturb the hush,
Lays her wan cheek still closer to his heart,
And listens as its varying pulses move
Haply to catch a sound betokening life.
It beats—again—another—and another,
And now hath ceased for ever.”

When by the couch of some lov'd one we stand,
Waiting the moment, when death's withering hand
Shall quench the last fond ling'ring light that shines
In the dim eyes, as pulse by pulse declines;
Oh, what the sinking spirit can sustain,
In that extremity of earthly pain,
But the sure hope of Immortality,
Reserved for those who in the Saviour die?
Yet sighs will rise—repining tears will flow,
While journeying lonely in this world of woe,

Although we deem, that those for whom we weep,
Rest from their labours, in untroubled sleep ;
But, oh ! *their* grief, that to the grave consign
The friend beloved, who “died and made no sign,”
And that lost one, a brother—parent—child,
For ever from th’ eternal God exiled.
Earth has no language, for the soul to tell
The withering agony of their farewell,
Who trembling watch life’s latest struggles o’er,
And part, assured that they shall meet no more,
No, not in Heaven,—and yet through lingering years,
Live on, *alone*, amid this world of tears !
—This have I seen a widowed mother bear,
And marked her fruitless struggles with despair,
When she had buried her dear idol boy,
And with him every hope of earthly joy ;
True, she performed life’s heartless duties still,
And seemed to bow submissive to His will,
Who took her darling child, ere manhood’s bloom,
And left his mother “sorrowing o’er his tomb.”

No slow disease a kindly warning gave,
Pointing its victim to the opening grave ;
Joyful in health when his last morning rose,
And cold in death or e'er the evening's close !
Then came the Tempter, in that trying hour,
And Faith and Hope expired beneath his power,
One horrid thought filled demon-like her breast,
She deemed his parted spirit was not blest !

Oh, what a weight of grief the heart will bear
And yet not break—upheld alone by prayer ;
Her pitying friends would every evening come,
With kindest purpose, to her humble home,
And from the Holy Book read many a text,
Designed for mourning souls in spirit vex—
How that the Lord chastiseth oft in love,
To draw our wand'ring thoughts to things above,
And by mysterious judgments teach the breast
That leans on earth, that this is not our rest ;

And she would listen long, and often raise
Her eyes to Heaven, with meek beseeching gaze,
And hands uplifted clasped in voiceless prayer,
All vainly wrestling with her deep despair,
Yet could she find amid her doubts and fears,
No place of rest, though sought for oft with tears.

When sabbath bells called to the House of Prayer,
The earliest worshipper seen kneeling there,
Was this poor widow, in her lonely pew,
Waiting, in patient sorrow, to renew
Her supplications to the throne of Grace,
In the sweet language of that holy place,
Where oft the poor, "afflicted or distress'd
In mind, in body, or estate," find rest,
That there in mercy Heaven at length might shed,
Some bless'd assurance, that the early dead
Whom living most she loved, now slept in peace,
That so the anguish of her soul might cease.

And Hope a moment triumphed o'er despair ;
Yet when she heard the low responsive prayer,
'Good Lord deliver us from sudden death,'
Her pale form shook, and sighs disturbed her breath ;
Nor rose the Hallelujah from her tongue,
What time the holy hymn of praise was sung.
"Oh, it were mockery," she'd say, "to join
In songs of praise with heart so cold as mine."
Calmly she listened, when the preached word,
Declared the loving kindness of the Lord,
How those who sow, amid this vale of tears,
Faith's precious seed through sorrow's lingering years,
Shall surely come with joy their sheaves to reap
In that bless'd world, where none are known to weep ;
But if she heard pronounced the awful doom
Of the lost spirit, in the world to come,
The quenchless fire—the worm that will not die
Through the long ages of Eternity,
Her cheek grew pale, as life itself had fled,
And down she sank, unconscious as the dead,

While pitying friends, her fainting form who bore,
In mercy wished she might revive no more.

Pain dreams of health, and grief forgets to weep,
Fanned by thy downy wings, O gentle sleep,
The soul's mysterious trance—alas ! for those,
Who find in thee no refuge from their woes !
—When transient slumbers closed her aching eyes,
Unearthly visions would before her rise,
And her thoughts wander to the drear abode,
Of erring spirits reprobate from God ;
There she beheld her lost child's wretched form,
The living prey of guilt's undying worm,
And heard him call upon his mother's name
To cool his tongue, parched with eternal flame ;
Then would she rush to cross the gulph profound,
That parts those awful realms from holy ground,
And in the struggle wake,—nor could she deem,
That fearful vision, but a passing dream ;

Perchance, amid the terrors of the night,
Reason awhile withdrew her troubled light,
For she would speak of voices in her room,
And fancy that she saw amid the gloom,
Unholy forms that 'cross the darkness swept,
Whose rustling wings disturbed her while she slept.

When spring returns to wake her infant flowers,
From their long slumbers through the wintry hours,
Who has not felt, as clouds and storms depart,
A gleam of gladness cheer his fainting heart ;—
The rainbow image of creation's rest,
Faintly reflected in his troubled breast ?
—Then would she seek the garden's sheltered round,
Where every spot was consecrated ground,
Where every opening blossom seemed to shed,
A holy fragrance—breathing of the dead.
The rose he planted, just before he died,—
The paths where once they wandered, side by side,—

Th' o'er-hanging branches of the fav'rite vine,
That he was wont around their bower to twine,
Oh, these would call back long forgotten years,
And waken "thoughts that lay too deep for tears,"
That sadly sweet remembrance known alone,
To those who mourn some dear departed one !

There are who deem that when the soul draws near,
That awful hour of mingled hope and fear,
When it must take its disembodied flight,
That oft returning reason's heavenly light,
Chases the phantoms that becloud the brain,
And peace descends to glad the heart again ;
Yet 'twas not so with her,—to life's last hour,
That demon thought maintained its awful power ;
And when her kind friends strove to calm her fear,
As they beheld her parting hour draw near,
And spoke of that unseen, eternal shore,
Where those whom death has parted meet once more,

She raised her dying eyes upbraidingly,
While suff'ring nature struggled for reply,
"You know it's false" * were the last words that fell
From her cold lips, ere life had sighed farewell.
Yet, though the clouds of mental darkness spread,
A rayless gloom around her dying bed,
Emerging from the vale of death's dark shade,
Believing hope can see the soul conveyed
By hovering angels to those realms on high,
Where every tear is wiped from every eye!

* The reply of Cowper, in his last moments, to the friend who expressed his belief, that he was about to enter into that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

SUNSET.

"The Clouds, those beauteous robes of Heaven."

Oh ! who has not gazed on those beautiful fires,
Which rise in the heavens as day-light retires,
Like woman's warm blush, when the halo of fame,
Encircles with glory her young hero's name,
And marked how the storm-clouds that westward
 had rolled,
Shone bright as they bathed in those billows of gold.

Oh ! such was the brightness that youth once could cast
On the shadows of sorrow, when darkest they past,
As fast as they gathered, hope turned them to light,
And life, though still clouded, seemed lovely and bright,
'Till her veil of enchantment concealed them no more,
And our visions of glory were vanished and o'er.

CEPHAS' TEARS.

"When the Cock crew, he wept."

The last star's faint and lingering beam
Had faded with the shades of night,
And Zion's mount, and Kedron's stream,
Were tinged with morning's yellow light.

When once again dawn's watchful bird
Startled the erring Hebrew's ear ;
The shrill prophetic notes he heard
With that keen pang, the guilty fear.

"I know him not" was on his tongue,
But ere his perjur'd lips could close,
Swift as the flash from storm-clouds flung,
Remembrance of his guilt arose.

He met the Saviour's pitying look,
The mild upbraiding of His eye
Whom friends with curses had forsook,
And foes—exulting doom'd to die.

It told of warnings, pride had spurn'd,
Of treacherous friendship's coward fears ;
In anguish from that gaze he turn'd,
And wept reflection's bitter tears.

SPRING.

"How ill the scene that offers rest,
And heart that cannot rest, agree."

In vain does balmy breathing Spring,
Smile on my path, and round me fling
Visions of beauty, bright as brief,
Mocking the tearful eye of grief,
With hopes that lived in other years,
And joys, too quickly quenched in tears.

Beneath the hawthorn's snowy vest
The linnet hides its mossy nest ;
In sheltered copse—in tangled brake—
The deep blue violets awake ;
And where the unchained current flows,
Again the yellow cowslip blows.

Oh could I feel as I *have* felt,
When by yon streamlet's side I knelt,
And plucked the earliest primrose there,
A stranger all to grief and care.
Yon lark, that springs the morn to meet,
May raise his matin song as sweet,
But where, oh where's the bounding joy
That blest me when a guileless boy,
I wond'ring watch'd his tuneful flight,
'Till lost in floods of living light ?

To me, the rainbow tints of spring
No more can joy's brief transports bring ;
They but remind me of that hour
When I beheld each lovely flower,
Torn from its bed to deck the bier,
Where slumbered all that loved me here.
I saw the valley-lily rest
Upon her pure, pale, throbless breast ;

The primrose wreath, and cowslip bands,
Lay in her cold, unconscious hands ;
But chief the dark blue violet shed
Its odours round the early dead.
Oh, many a ling'ring year has past,
Since fond affection looked its last ;
But never in spring's sweetest bower,
Have I beheld that purple flower ;
But memory's burning tears would start,
And grief weigh heavier on my heart.
—They bore her to her place of rest,
Where holy men pronounced her bless'd ;
High strains of faith and hope were sung,
As the cold turf was o'er her flung ;
But all my wounded soul could hear,
Was the earth rattling on her bier.

She died, as those we love should die ;
Before life's evil hours drew nigh,

Her sun went down or e'er the day
In its high beauty passed away ;
Now, not a shadowing cloud can rise
To veil the brightness of her skies.—
Oh ! if from worlds of stainless bliss,
Departed souls may visit this,
Eliza ! guide me to thine own,
Where sorrow's footsteps are unknown.

L A Z A R U S .

When the repentant Mary wept
Beside the grave where Laz'rus slept,
And marked the lowly Jesus near,
Give sigh for sigh, and tear for tear,
"Hads't thou been here," the mourner cried,
"Then Lord, my brother had not died."

With pitying eyes the Saviour viewed
Her faith and hope, by grief subdued,
"And if thou can'st believe," he said,
"Thy brother yet shall leave the dead ;
"Laz'rus come forth !" and at the word,
The grave its transient guest restored.
He came,—the seal that death had set
On his glazed eyeballs lingered yet,

And off his pale sepulchral form
There rolled the loathsome charnel worm,
While backward bent in wild amaze,
The awe-struck crowd in silence gaze ;
'Till at the Saviour's meek command,
They clasp the damp, cold, chilly hand,
Loose the grave-clothes that round him clung,
And wipe the dews of death that hung
Upon his livid lips and brow,
And let the ransomed captive go.

THE STEPMOTHER.

"She saw me weep, and asked in high disdain,
If tears would bring my mother back again?"

"Well, I will try and love her then,
But do not ask me yet ;
You know my *own* dear dead Mamma,
I never must forget ;

Don't you remember, dear Papa,
The night before she died
You carried me into her room ?
How bitterly I cried !

Her thin white fingers on my head
So earnestly she laid,
And her sunk eyes gleamed fearfully
I felt almost afraid ;

You lifted me upon the bed,
To kiss her pale cold cheek ;
And something rattled in her throat,
I scarce could hear her speak ;—

But she did whisper,—“when I’m gone
For ever from your sight,
And others have forgotten me,
Don’t *you* forget me quite !”

And often in my dreams I feel
Her hand upon my head,
And see her sunken eyes as plain,
As if she were not dead.

I hear her feeble well-known voice,
Amidst the silent night,
Repeat her dying words again—
“Don’t *you* forget me quite !”

It sometimes wakes me, and I think,
I'll run into her room,
And then I weep to recollect,
She's sleeping in the tomb.

I miss her in our garden walks ;—
At morn and ev'ning prayer ;
At church—at play—at home—abroad,
I miss her ev'ry where :—

But most of all, I miss her when
The pleasant daylight's fled,
And strangers draw the curtains round
My lonely little bed !—

For no one comes to kiss me now,
Nor bid poor Anne—"Good night ;"
Nor hear me say my pretty hymn ;
I shall forget it quite !

They tell me *this* Mamma is rich,
And beautiful, and fine ;
But will she love you, dear Papa,
More tenderly than mine ?

And will she when the fever comes
With its bewild'ring pain,
Watch night by night your restless couch
Till you are well again ?

When first she sung your fav'rite song,
"Come to the Sunset Tree,"
Which my poor mother used to sing,
With me upon her knee :—

I saw you turn your head away ;
I saw your eyes were wet ;
'Midst all our glittering company,
You do not quite forget !

But must you never wear again,
The ring poor mother gave ?
Will it be long before the grass
Is green upon her grave ? ”

He turn'd him from that gentle child,
His eyes with tears were dim,
At thought of the undying love,
Her mother bore to him ;

He met his gay, his beauteous bride,
With spirits low and weak,
And miss'd the kind consoling words
The dead was wont to speak.

Long years roll'd on ; but hope's gay flowers
Blossom'd for him in vain ;
The freshness of life's morning hours,
Never returned again !

W O M A N ' S T E A R .

“They err who say, that woman’s *smile*
Can sorrow’s saddest hour beguile ;”
It is not so—her timid tear
Can more the wounded spirit cheer.
Her smiles, our noon of joy may bless
With beauty’s nameless loveliness,
But when Hope’s fairy dreams are fled,
When her pale blighted flowers are dead,
And earth’s lone wanderer tempest tost,
Finds all but woman’s love is lost,
Then, pillow’d on her throbbing breast,
She calms his wounded soul to rest,
As sweetly as the night dews close
The storm-rent petals of the rose.

WRITTEN AT THE APPROACH
OF WINTER.

"Fled is the blasted verdure of the fields,
And shrunk into their beds, the flowery race
Their sunny robes resign."

From the dark portals of the north,
As winter wildly rushes forth,
With frozen locks and clouded brow,
And round him wrapt his vest of snow,
Autumn averts her pallid face
From the rude stranger's withering gaze ;
Her wreaths of corn and robes of gold,
Touched by his icy fingers cold,
Are falling fast on earth's chill bed,
In silent sadness sear and dead.
No more the melody of love
Is warbled sweetly through the grove,

Save at the closing hour of day,
When the lone redbreast's plaintive lay
Steals on the listening wanderer's ear,
A requiem to the dying year.

—Where now are all the flowers of spring,
That scented zephyr's silken wing ?
Where the bright garlands summer's hand
Profusely scattered o'er the land ?
And dearer far, the faint perfume
Of lingering autumn's parting bloom,
Which 'mid the falling verdure cast
A gleam of gladness to the last ?

—In earth's cold bosom buried deep
The embryo buds securely sleep,
While winter o'er their frozen beds
His snowy mantle lightly spreads,
'Till field and forest—hill and dale,
Are covered with the dazzling veil
Which sparkles on the bending spray,
Like diamonds, in the sunny ray,

And melting falls so bright and clear,
"It rivals all but beauty's tear."

Oh ! long shall Hope her vigils keep,
And many a tempest o'er them sweep,
Ere they shall lift their fragrant heads
Uninjured from those snowy beds,
And bright their silken leaves unfold,
In shades of crimson, green and gold.
Departing winter's icy tear
Shall in the snowdrop's bud appear—
The violet in her purple vest,
On mossy turfs again shall rest—
And beauty's blushing rose adorn
With virgin sweets yon shapeless thorn,
When gentle spring, with magic power,
Returns to raise each faded flower.

Come then, ethereal stranger, come
From Eden's vale—thy native home !

Where winter never ventures nigh,
To dim the brightness of thine eye ;
Where to the rose the nightingale
Repeats his fondest, sweetest tale,
"Till the high notes so thrilling clear,
Shake from its leaves eve's trembling tear.
When gentle gales begin to blow,
And earth receives the melting snow,
Then, musing on his lonely way,
Oft shall thy fond enthusiast stray
Where thy light footsteps first are seen
Imprinted on the dewy green
And listen, with an anxious ear,
The cuckoo's welcome note to hear,
Or watch the earliest swallow spring
O'er the blue wave with feeble wing,
Or search each wild sequestered bower,
For thy own fragrant purple flower.
Oh ! there are spells in these to raise
The shadowy forms of other days,—

Of youth's pure joys for ever fled,—
Of friends, long with the voiceless dead,
'Till fancy meets their glistening eye,
And hears the filial fond "good bye."
As when with hand in hand we roved
Through fields our happy childhood loved,
Come then, ethereal stranger, come
From Eden's vale—thy native home !
Hope's patient smile—love's tender tear—
Joy's beaming eye, await thee here ;
E'en sorrow owns thy soothing power,
For oft at evening's silent hour,
When glimmering in the blue serene,
Her herald star is dimly seen,
Watching with pale and languid ray,
The lingering beams of parting day ;
The widowed mourner loves to weep
Where fond affection's ashes sleep ;
And, as he marks with tearful eyes,
The grave where all that loved him lies,

With spring's reviving blossoms gay ;
Faith points to that eternal day,
Which soon shall chase the wintry gloom,
That deepens round the voiceless tomb :
Each flower that takes its tender birth
And rises from that sacred earth,*
A messenger of peace appears,
To check despair's repining tears,
As if the slumb'ring dead awoke,
And thus the grave's deep silence broke :
"On death's long wintry night shall rise
"Eternal spring and cloudless skies,
"Then virtue from this mouldering bed,
"Shall lift with joy her languid head,
"No more to breathe grief's parting sigh,
"And tears be wiped from every eye."

* "Tis from her lowly virgin earth
That white rose takes its tender birth."

BRIDE OF ABYDOS.

THE DELUGE.

"And the Lord shut him in."—GENESIS vii., 16.

Ere the door closed, the aged Patriarch took
A long farewell, a painful parting look
Of all that yet remained of the green earth,
So wildly beautiful ; its second birth,
For erring man's transgressions doubly curst,
Would be but the dim shadow of the first.

A wilderness of waters rolled around
In shoreless majesty, that knew no bound,
While here and there the mountain cedars stood,
With feathery branches high above the flood,

And to their trunks with desp'rate grasp still clung
The wearied swimmer, round whose legs there hung
Half drowned wretches in their agony,
While ever and anon a dying cry,
As one by one they loosed their slippery hold,
And the wide waste of waters o'er them rolled,
Reached their despised Prophet as he stood
And from the ark surveyed the tumbling flood.

T O * * * * *

"She lives not now—or darker lot,
Her virtues live no more."

Though years have past since last we met,
The dear remembrance haunts me yet ;
I cannot tear thee from my heart,
All vile and worthless as thou art ;
Not, though thy soulless glances fall
In guilty gladness now on all ;
The visions of my youth are gone,
But its first feelings still live on,
As wildly fresh as when I twined
The cowslip-wreath thy locks to bind,
The sunny smiles that light thee now
Like fun'ral lamps, but serve to show
The shadows that around thee roll,
And darken thy polluted soul.

—I could have borne to see thee bless
Another with thy loveliness,
Though all forsaken and forgot
Amid thy higher, happier lot.
—I could have borne—aye day by day,
To see thy beauty melt away,—
To watch thee sinking to the grave,
Without the power to soothe or save.
Though deep the agony, 'twere sweet
To think that we again should meet,
Where earthly greatness could not prove
A barrier to my humble love ;
But now—I cannot name thy name,
Save with the burning blush of shame :
Nor think, without grief's starting tear
That darker scenes are drawing near.
—God help thee on that awful day,
When earth's delusions melt away ;
When pomp, and pride, and power retire,
And leave thee lonely to expire.

HAPPINESS.

"Sweet plant of Paradise—'tis sometimes found
In here and there a breast of heavenly mould,
It rises soon and buds, but ne'er was known
To blossom here—the climate is too cold."

When happiness, celestial flower,
Was planted first in Eden's bower,
Angels beheld with wond'ring eyes,
So distant from its native skies,
The lovely plant bloom bright on earth,
As in their heaven that gave it birth ;
But soon the sighs and tears of grief,
Withered and stained each snowy leaf,
And never from that evil hour,
Has honour, genius, wealth or power,
Seen full in bloom the lovely flower ;

For though its humble buds are found
Where virtue's hands have dressed the ground,
Before the beauteous leaves expand,
Some wintry blast—some reckless hand,
With lingering blight or swift decay,
Snatches the tender plant away.

THE CHRYSANTHEMUM.

Amidst the smiles and tears of Spring,
I watch'd it day by day,
In sober verdure simply clad,
When all around was gay !

—Like flakes of pure unsullied snow,
The apple-blossoms fell ;
The cowslips faded in the grove,
The violets in the dell ;

And Summer in his car of fire,
'Midst showers of roses came,
And woo'd each coy retiring flower,
With fierce impetuous flame :—

Their folded blossoms slowly oped,
To his insidious ray,
And then, like woman's trusting love,
Were left to swift decay !

—Mild Autumn with his shorten'd days,
And chilly nights, drew nigh,
Crown'd with brown wreaths of waving corn,
He pass'd in triumph by ;

And call'd each ling'ring blossom forth,
In parting beauty dress'd,
But this, 'midst nature's carnival,
No sign of joy express'd ;

'Till Autumn, on the yellow leaves,
Had fondly look'd his last,
And Winter, from the clear cold sky,
His icy glance had cast :—

'Twas then, when all besides had sunk
 Beneath his with'ring breath,
Its welcome blossoms meekly waved,
 Above their bed of death !

And is not woman's changeless love,
 Like this fair faithful flower ;
Too oft neglected 'midst the blaze,
 Of honor, pride, and power ?

But when our summer friends are flown,
 Like birds of wand'ring wing,
That seek beneath a brighter sky,
 Another, fairer, spring ;—

'Tis then, her sweet unfading smile,
 Illumes our wint'ry day,
And well supplies the place of all,
 The world can take away !

L I N E S

SUGGESTED BY GRANET'S PICTURE OF THE INTERIOR
OF A NUNNERY, WITH A GIRL TAKING THE VEIL.

"In her gentle bosom sleep
Feelings, affections, destined now to die,
To wither like the blossom in the bud."

She kneels before the sacred shrine,
Her meek eyes raised in prayer divine
To the Holy Virgin's sinless child,
Which on the breathing canvas smiled,
That he would grant supporting power,
To bear her through the trying hour,
And nerve her timid, trembling heart,
To act a more than Martyr's part.

O, gorgeous was the bright array,
That grac'd the idol of the day,
And rich the sparkling gems she wore,
Which henceforth must be worn no more ;

And her's the lofty praises poured
By servants of the living Lord,
On those who flee from earth's unrest,
To be by Heaven's high favour blest :
Yet, from the pitying crowd was heard
Regret, in many a whispered word,
That one so young, so fair, should dwell
Within the Cloister's lonely cell,
Where peace, and joy, and love, are given,
A living sacrifice to Heaven.
—Tears, such as only parents shed,
Are falling on the victim's head,
While bigot zeal's upbraiding look,
Can ill such earthly weakness brook,
As though a mother's holy tear,
Left sin-stains on a child so dear.
Are her trembling limbs and fault'ring voice,
Repentant tokens of her choice ?
The pomp, the splendour, all too bright
For her o'erpowered, bewildered sight ?

Or is her gaze cast vainly round,
To seek a rest she hath not found ?
Perchance her wand'ring wishes stray
To her childhood's home, away—away ;
Where fond remembrance clings in vain,
To things she ne'er must see again,—
To *one*, whose image from her heart,
Must slowly trace by trace depart,
Albeit it hovers round her now,
And shares with Heaven her plighted vow.
—'Twas but a moment ;—these have passed
From her pure spotless soul, as fast
As from the sullied mirror flies
The transient breath of beauty's sighs !

The long bright tresses she had worn
In her pride of birth, their hands have shorn,
That she may cast them off and say,
“ Thus I renounce the world for aye ; ”

O'er her fair form, so deadly pale,
Is thrown the fearful mystic veil,
Obedient to her order's vow,
And earth to her—is nothing now !
—A brighter light is in her eyes,
As she turns them to her native skies,
And voices sweet as Cherubim
Begin the consecrated hymn,
While pealing organs loud and long,
Through echoing aisles the strains prolong,
'Till the rapt soul is borne away
From earth, to Heaven's pure perfect day !

* * * * *

'Tis over, and her throbbing head
Rests on her low and lonely bed,
And in the visions of the night,
Again that splendour mocks her sight :
Oh ! happy were she, if her sleep
Were like the grave's, as long—as deep ;

But she must wake with morning's beam,
From all that bright, delusive dream,
And shudd'ring view her narrow cell,
Where earthly passions should not dwell :
The vain repinings of despair
Will mingle with her midnight prayer,
And uncongenial minds impart
Their blighting feelings to her heart,
'Till all life's best affections die,
And every tender earthly tie
Break in the struggle, and the mind
Be to its suff'ring fate resigned.

SOLITUDE.

" Which is the worst of ills that wait on age,
What stamps the wrinkle deeper in the brow ?
To see each loved one blotted from life's page,
And be alone on earth, as I am now."

When exiled solitude
Explored earth's wildest glen,
To find a home in deserts rude,
Far from the haunts of men ;
She sought the holy hermit's cell,
But there the wanderer might not dwell.

The shipwrecked seaman, thrown
On ocean's farthest shore,
Where human footstep ne'er was known
To print the soil before,

Awhile received the pensive guest,
But there the stranger could not rest.

Within the wither'd heart,
Whence all but life has fled ;
Where joy's bright beams no warmth impart,
Nor grief her shadows spread,
Earth's weary wand'rer sought her rest,
And found it in that lonely breast.

DEPARTED FRIENDS.

"In Heaven the relationship must be entirely of a spiritual nature, and if a difference shall exist in the amount of our regard for one more than another, it will vary, probably, in proportion to their likeness to their Lord."—

MEMOIR OF MRS. BICKERSTETH.

They tell us, that in yonder sphere,
Friends whom we loved and cherished here,
Lose, 'mid their bright ethereal skies,
All memory of earth's tender ties :

Or if remembrance wakes, 'tis vain,—
No ling'ring fondness they retain
For *one*, of Heaven's high seraph band,
More than the rest, that countless stand

Around their God's eternal throne :
Save for those happier souls alone,
Whose faith and zeal and fervent love,
Shine brightest in the courts above.

—Oh earth ! must these fond hopes of ours,
Like thy fair northern native flowers,
Transplanted to a purer air,
Languish and droop and perish there ?

In life or death, it is indeed,
A cheerless, cold, unwelcome creed,
But most we mourn its withering power,
In suffering nature's parting hour :

When by our dying friends we stand,—
Feel the faint pressure of their hand,
And mark the cold white lips that try,
To thank and bless us ere they die ;—

How will the heart's affections rise,
How lonely seem the distant skies,
To think, when life's last struggle's o'er,
That they shall live *for us* no more :—

That earthly friendship, earthly love,
Can find no place in worlds above ;
That angels have—nor smile—nor tear,
For joy or grief partaken here.

Surely the mounting spirit bends
An earthward glance on weeping friends ;
Or is its new-found world of bliss,
Too bright, too fair, for thought of this ?

Will not the pious mother's joy,
Be heighten'd when her darling boy,
The object of her daily prayer
In robes of light shall meet her there ?

Or can it *Lucy*, ever be,
That thou wilt be no more to me,
Than stranger spirits, in that clime,
Where never stretched the wings of time ?

Should this be so,—guide of my youth,
Forgive me that the fearful truth,
Falls cold and heavy on my heart,
As I behold my friends depart ;

For I had fondly hoped that there,
Our kindred souls, like bliss would share,
Would meet around the eternal throne,
And know, as they themselves are known.

Oh let not earth's delusions twine,
And mingle thus with things divine,
Lest bound with strong affection's chain,
We seek our future rest in vain.

Though clouds and shadows now surround,
And dimly veil that holy ground,
All that is dark and doubtful here,
Will there in lines of light appear.

ON THE BAPTISM OF THE
PRINCE OF WALES.

Blessings on thee, beauteous Boy,
Thine is earth's exalted joy,
Object of a nation's care,
Of a mother's daily prayer,
Born to all this world can give,
Endless blessings with thee live !
Like the lowly peasant's child,
Brought to ~~Him~~ the reconciled,
Sign'd and sealed with His Cross,
That through peril, pain, and loss,
Thou may'st not ashamed be,
To fight hereafter manfully,
'Gainst thy three all powerful foes,
Authors of a nation's woes.

Rich as our nation's annals are,
In all that's glorious, good, and fair,
May our children's children see,
Those glories far surpassed by thee.
Full of years, when time has shed
Silver honours on thy head,
Thou at eventide lay down,
England's bright untarnish'd crown,
Then be thine we humbly pray,
The crown which fadeth not away.

A GRECIAN FUNERAL.

"The priests move first, bearing their burning tapers, and by their dark and flowing robes give an idea of mourning in harmony with the occasion. The corpse is always exhibited to full view. It is placed upon a bier, which is borne aloft upon the shoulders, and is dressed in the best and gayest garments possessed by the deceased. I have sometimes seen a young female, who had departed in the bloom of youth and beauty, adorned rather as a Bride to meet the Bridegroom, than as one who was to be the tenant of the chamber of corruption. The closing part of the Greek Burial-service, commencing with the words, 'Come, and impart the last embrace,' is very affecting. The friends of the departed press forward from every part of the church, and kiss the cold and pallid lips, and weep over the corpse."—RESEARCHES IN GREECE AND THE LEVANT.

They bore her to her long, long home,
With music sadly sweet ;
Arrayed in all her gorgeous robes,
The bridegroom, Death to meet.

His with'ring kisses had not yet
Defaced her beauteous form,
Nor left on her pale lips, the trace
Of darkness and the worm.

And holy men of God were there,
Who burning tapers bore ;
Lighting the passage to the tomb,
Whence man returns no more !

There is a sad and solemn pause,
And grief itself is dumb,
Waiting in breathless agony,
For that sad summons—"Come ;"—

"Come and impart the last embrace !"
Around the bier they kneel ;
Oh ! who can tell, in that farewell,
All that the mourners feel !

They clasp the cold and stiffen'd hand,
And tears, like summer rain,
Fall fast on th' unconscious face,—
That last relief to pain.

Whilst gazing on the voiceless dead,
That uncomplaining lies,
What thoughts of unrequited love,
Upbraidingly arise :—

And words and deeds of former years,
Unkindly spoke or done,
Start from their long forgotten graves,
Like spectres, one by one :—

And trifles, once thought, light as air,
Scarce noted at the time ;
That waked the lost one's passing sigh,
Weigh on the heart, like crime :—

And doubts that rack the reeling brain,
Will all unbidden come ;—
“What, if the spirit vainly mourns
Its lost eternal home :”—

“Amid the regions of despair,
The worm that never dies ;
Whence glimpses of the far-off heaven,
In madd’ning glory rise ?”

Oh earth ! what hast thou left to give,
When those we love, depart,
And leave, of all our dreams of bliss,
Nought but a broken heart ?

’Tis mercy guides the with’ring blast,
That sweeps our idols down ;
That the poor mourner, hope bereft,
Might worship God alone.

L I N E S
ADDRESSED TO
THE REV. J. BICKERSTETH,
ON HIS LEAVING ACTON.

Servant of God, farewell !—A few short years,
And we shall meet again, where parting tears
Are never shed ; where we no more shall need,
The frail support of one earth-shaken reed,
Nor see again the fingers of decay,
Write on our dearest joys, "*passing away*."

Servant of God, farewell !—I offer not
The meed of earthly praise, thou need'st it not,
Nor would'st accept it, were it mine to give ;
Thy sole ambition, (if such thought can live
In humble hearts like thine,) is but to meet
Thy little flock at the Redeemer's feet,

Nor see of all thou loved, one absent there :—
For this, ascends to Heaven thy frequent prayer,
For this, long years of trusting toil were given,
And seed, thus sown in faith, *must* bloom in Heaven.
Servant of God, farewell !—Yet from thy heart,
The light of other days will ne'er depart ;
Nor can the stranger's kindest welcome given,
Nor Past'ral cares, that lift the soul to Heaven,—
Nor joy—nor grief—that waits thy future lot,
Cause thy loved *Acton* to be all forgot !
No ! midst thy thoughts by day, thy dreams by night,
Its quiet beauty meets thy mental sight ;
Its Church, where mingled prayer and praise arose,
From hearts and lips now sealed in death's repose ;
Where the glad spirit broke her six day's chain,
And soar'd unfetter'd to her God again ;
Where, like the Angel at Bethesda's pool,
Sweet peace came down to heal the wounded soul,—
To raise the friendless mourner's failing eyes,
From his lone cot, to mansions in the skies,

Content to bear affliction's heaviest rod,
So it but brought him nearer to his God !
—Around the sacred walls in peace they rest,
And shall hereafter rise and call thee bless'd ;
Shall be thy joy and everlasting crown,
In that high world where parting is unknown !
—There slumbers *one* amongst those holy dead,
Whose sun went down, ere noon's bright beams were fled
Who shared, with thee, the burden and the heat,
Of life's best days, in that belov'd retreat,
And now, beneath its mem'ry-hallow'd sod,
“In sure and certain hope,” she waits the trump of God !”

THE HOMEWARD VOYAGE.

The subject of the following lines was wrecked on the Coast of China, during the time of our late War with that country, and subjected to a lengthened imprisonment, accompanied by such cruel treatment, that when released from his captivity he died on his voyage home.

Swift o'er the waters like an uncaged bird,
The gallant ship by welcome breezes stirred,
With swelling sails and flutt'ring pennons gay
Cut thro' the sparkling waves her homeward way !
Upon her laughing deck apart there stands
A recent Captive, from far distant lands ;
Few were his years, unreach'd his summer prime,
Grief's with'ring hand had done the work of time,
But now the stranger Hope had kindly come,
And made his happy heart her transient home ;
E'en wasting sickness owned the powerful sway,
And left her victim for a little day,
But to return alas ! with added power,
For the brief bliss of that exhausting hour.

His once strong frame by cruel hardships broke,
Too plainly of the final issue spoke,
Yet would he pace the deck whilst strength remained,
Or clinging to the mast, his sight he strained,
Where the blue waters blending with the sky,
Told where his distant Island-home must lie ;
And, gazing stand, 'till in his aching eyes,
The gathering tears of memory would rise,
And weak with pain, and faint with hope delayed,
Back to his restless couch he was again conveyed.
At every pause of duty through the day,
There would his pitying shipmates take their way,
Shake his thin hand, and whisper in his ear,
Rough words of kindness, meant his soul to cheer.
When in his lonely hammock close confined,
The white sail flapping in the fav'ring wind,
The sailor's joyous shout—the creaking mast—
The rushing waves, as swift the vessel pass'd,
Waked the faint hope, “to die at home at last.”—

Then would he open all his little store,
Meant for that Mother he must see no more,
And turn with moisten'd eyes his treasures o'er :—
Spoils snatch'd from ocean's deep exhaustless bed,
Long to be kept as relics of the dead ;—
Strange shells, and weeds, found on a foreign strand,
With curious carvings from that distant land,
Gay insects—birds—and gorgeous butterflies,
Whose colours, heightened by those glorious skies,
Gleam with a radiance dazzling to behold,
In ming'ling hues of azure, green, and gold.
For his kind Sisters he had duly saved,
Ivory and cups, by native artists graved,
And sighed to think how with a miser's care
They'd hoard the trifles he had gathered there.
And thus the sailor died :—in ocean's deeps,
The home-returning wanderer soundly sleeps,
The clustering sea-weeds wrapped around his head,
Till earth and ocean shall give up their dead.

THE DEATH OF ELI.

Samuel IV., v. 12.

Without the city's farthest gate
The venerable Eli sate,
With trembling heart and faded eye,
Watching in speechless agony,
While Israel's fugitive revealed
Tidings from *Aphek's* fatal field.

Grief's solemn symbols on his head,
In dust and ashes vainly spread ;
His vest all rent and dyed in blood,
A moment's space he panting stood.
"From the battle field to-day I sped,
"Where Israel's vanquished thousands bled,

“O’ertaken, in their shameless flight,
“By proud Philistia’s conq’ring might ;
“There were brave hearts that vainly tried
“To stem the rolling recreant tide,
“And in the struggle nobly died ;
“Hophni and Phinehas both are slain,
“And God’s own ark is captive ta’en.”

The patriot wept not, when he told
Of chosen Judah’s scattered fold,
And nerv’d his wounded soul to bear
A childless parent’s deep despair ;
But when of God’s own ark he spoke,
His o’ercharged heart in mercy broke,
And his freed spirit winged its way,
From shadowy types, to perfect day.

BIRTH-DAY LINES,
ADDRESSED TO MISS * * * * *

WRITTEN FOR HER AFFECTIONATE PUPILS.

"If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."—MATT., c. xviii, v. 19.

We claim that promise Gracious Lord,
Be it according to Thy word ;
—Spirit of Peace who lov'st to see
Thy children dwell in unity,
And kindly promisest to hear
And answer their united prayer,
List whilst our mingled voices blend,
And plead for our unwearied friend.

As Summer's gentle dews and showers
Call forth from earth her fragrant flowers,
So let her counsels day by day
Find to our inmost souls their way,
And rise in after years to bless,
With fruits and flowers of holiness,
The rugged paths perchance that lie
Hid in thy mists—futuraity.

When stretched across the trembling skies
The great white Throne at last shall rise,
And the Eternal Master ask
How each performed th' allotted task
With talents ten, or five, or one,
What for the Saviour we have done ?
Oh then shall all thy pious care
With grateful joy be published there ;

Fruit, plucked from life's eternal tree,
From seeds of goodness sown by thee,
And we perchance to thee shall owe
More than mortality can know.

Thus we affectionately pray,
On this thy joyous natal day,
And duly as the year comes round,
May it with added peace be crowned.

TRIBUTARY VERSES.

Come to the Christian's bed of death,
And see her yield her peaceful breath ;
Disease and pain, and sighs and tears,
Have followed her, long lingering years,
And yet through all that weary way,
Her God has made her darkness day,
His gracious hand severely kind,
Thus cuts the silken cords that bind
The soul to earth and earthly things,
And will not let it spread its wings ;
And soar by Faith away, away,
To the bright realms of endless day.
See on her cold and marble brow,
The dews of death are gathering now,
And on her fixed and glazing eyes,
His icy hand all heavy lies,
Yet light descends at even-tide,
The fainting pilgrim's steps to guide ;—

How, like the home-returning dove,
She longs to take her flight above,
And asks with accents weak and low,
"Is it not almost over now?" *
Yes ! the glad hour approaches fast,
The bitterness of death is past,
One parting sigh, and she is gone,
To bow before th' eternal throne.
Legions of Angels bright and fair,
Welcome her stranger spirit there,
And foremost of those glittering bands,
One gentle Cherub waiting stands ;
The mother sees and knows *her child*,
And straight towards THE RECONCIL'D,
Their joyful souls together move,
And feel indeed, that "God is love."

* "During her long and painful illness, Mrs. — manifested an entire resignation to the will of God, yet with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, she had "a desire to depart and to be with Christ," and during her last night on earth she raised her dying eyes to the friend who was watching by her bed, and feebly asked—"*Is it not almost over ?*" Soon after, her happy spirit took its flight to God who gave it.

Then mourner, dry that selfish tear,
Thou would'st not wish her tarriance here,
To see her wasted form again,
The victim of disease and pain,
To mark the patient sufferer lie
Waiting in agony to die,
Till wearied with the lengthened road,
And longing to be with her God,
She ask with accents faint and low,
"Is it not almost over now?"
Oh ! meekly kiss the uplifted rod,
Arise and follow her to God,
Gird all thy Christian armour on,
Beware "that no man take thy Crown ;"
Be but her faith and patience thine,
Let but thy light as brightly shine,
And ye shall meet upon that shore,
Where friends once met, can part no more.

THE DOVE.

"He sent forth the Dove out of the ark, and the Dove came in to him in the evening, and lo in her mouth was an Olive leaf pluckt off."—GENESIS viii, v. 10, 11.

With heart-sick yearning to behold again
The stranger earth's green and undeluged plain,
Th' imprison'd Patriarch watched her as she flew,
Till lost in the horizon's misty blue,
Where the yet heaving ocean seemed to rise,
And mingle with the dim and distant skies !

When on the waters, at the close of day,
The lengthen'd shadow of that lone ark lay ;
Fluttering around her place of rest was heard
The rustling wing of the returning bird,

Faint with her flight, and in her bill was seen,
One little olive leaf of shining green,
The first glad token that the deluged world,
Was not in wrath to utter ruin hurl'd !

—While borne upon that wilderness of waves
They sailed above Creation's countless graves,
Love, strong as death, and grateful Hope were there,
And Faith, to lift to Heaven the frequent prayer ;
But *Joy* they knew not, till that wearied Dove,
Bore to the ark, earth's leafy gift of love.

THE END.



